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E. M. CIORAN:
Encounter with the Void

OSIP MANDELSTAM:
Fourth Prose

GIUSEPPE UNGARETTI:
Little Monologue—a poem

PATRICK CRUTTWELL:
Blake and Tradition

STANLEY KAUFFMANN:
An Album

Poems by JOHN GARDNER, ROGER HOBDELL, JOHN PECK, NORMAN PORTER, JAMES WRIGHT.

Articles and Reviews by WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD, GUY DAVENPORT, HAYDEN CARRUTH, ROGER SALE, ROBERT GARIS, VERNON YOUNG, STEPHEN FARBER, JOHN SIMON, B. H. HAGGIN, CHARLES W. MILLARD.

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THE
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Reports

Museo, Museas, Museat

"It is particularly appropriate that Xerox chose to underwrite 'New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940-1970'; the corporation's own growth and success parallels exactly the period that this exhibition celebrates, and the graphic image of Xerox has always reflected the best in contemporary design. . . .

"The show is creative in the curatorial sense because one man, Henry Geldzahler, *endowed with a formidable visual talent,* has chosen 408 paintings, sculptures and drawings of the highest character, *each the most important statement in a particular moment of an artist's career.*"—Thomas P. Hoving, in the catalogue of *New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940-1970,* The Metropolitan Museum, New York, 1969 [my italics].

"As curator, my guiding principles in deciding which artists to include in the exhibition. . . . have been the extent to which their work has commanded critical attention *or* deflected the course of recent art. . . . [my italics].

"Jules Olitski's low-lying sprayed aluminum sculptures are as subtle and as full of implications for the future as anything in the art of the past decade. . . .

"The making of reputations and discovery of new talent is not the role of the Metropolitan. . . .

"It seems today that Pop Art was an episode. . . .

"There are no safe reputations in Modern Art."—Henry Geldzahler, *Ibid.*

THE VISITOR TO THE New York painting (and sculpture) show at the Metropolitan Museum this winter was forewarned by a huge and ubiquitous poster-like logo designed by Frank Stella (it is hard to tell what his design was; whether this is a used painting or a commercial emblem; the problem is not merely scale). In addition, sales desks in the museum offered an enamelled Stella paperweight of the same pattern. Even though this artist has in the past lent his work to the adornment of fur coats and needlepoint chair covers, such exploitation of the commodity function of art boded badly for the seriousness of an exhibition purporting to have the say above all other says on the history of New York's phenomenal rise to first art city of the world. While the art itself, and its development, are often poorly served, aspects of the power and marketing structures secondarily responsible for this rise are amply displayed by the exhibition. The names and the plays are deftly concealed among the blooms, but to those who have followed their art world scorecards for a few years the thorns can draw blood.

By the time I saw this financial and esthetic lollapalooza I'd heard

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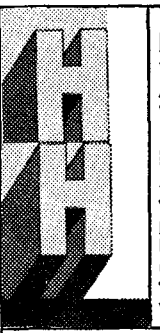

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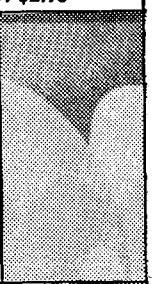

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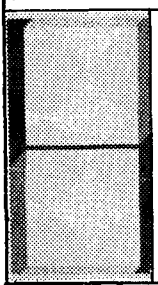

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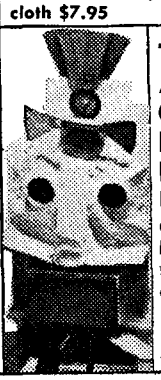

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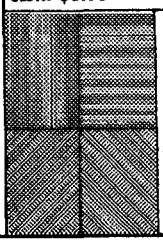

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a good deal about it—much unfavorable. Going through the first few rooms (Pollock, Still, Kline, Rothko, Gorky) I couldn't imagine what all the complaints were about. A room of Stuart Davis didn't overwhelm as it could have, but included some strong paintings. If the Rothkos were badly lit, and suffered, they were still Rothkos, and a room full of them was an exhilarating experience. The Gorky room overcame the absence of *The Liver is the Cock's Comb*. Hofmann looked better than usual and Kline looked very strong, standing up to Still's great weighty panoramas. I keep using the word strong because, for better or worse, a huge show like this provides an exercise in comparative strengths; if one is an historian as well as a pleasure-seeker, the temptations can be irresistible; "strength" and "standing up well against" become the salient secondary criteria, esthetic enjoyment remaining the primary one. Unfortunately, this is an aspect easily manipulated by the curator; paintings are sensitive objects; their strength can be misrepresented; they can be "killed" by inept or malicious misplacement, bad lighting, false juxtaposition, in all of which this show, surely one of the messiest installations ever seen in New York's hygienically-oriented museums, abounds.

Around the Newman, Motherwell, Gottlieb section my growing uneasiness surfaced. Beautiful major works continued throughout the show, but what in the first rooms had seemed unworthy nitpicking about the arbitrariness of selection now became insistent. Newman's canvases looked less substantial, less glowingly confident than they had in a similar show at the Modern last summer; the inclusion of recent work and exclusion of *Vir Heroicus Sublimis* was crucial. A small understated Tony Smith sculpture stood before a bombastic black and white Motherwell, doing neither one a favor. Smith was badly represented; Motherwell was badly represented, and oddly dispersed. Others were done similar disservices: Gottlieb by inclusion of his sculpture, shown for the first time here; Olitski by the inclusion of his sculpture (first shown at the Met some months ago) and a lousy early painting, exclusion of the period that produced his best work, such as *Beautiful Bald Woman;* Frankenthaler by inclusion of what could only be a student work and exclusion of her pivotal *Mountains and Sea,* Chamberlain by inclusion of only three sculptures, none after 1962, Kelly by inclusion of 30 drawings, 5 sculptures and 7 paintings (one 443″ long) making a good artist look ridiculous by massive overrepresentation compared to his peers and his betters; Stella by a motley collection in which the truly great black and aluminum paintings from 1959-61 were de-emphasized in favor of the big, decorative color works made after his decline. Josef Albers' major contribution to American painting has been his extended use of color as color within a neutral framework; his *Homage to the Square* series, dating from 1949, have a chromatic beauty combined with an obsessive intellectual austerity that honor both the German

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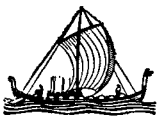

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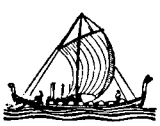

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and American traditions from which he emerged. At the Met this impact was skilfully dissipated by inclusion of other small works fortuitously relating to such uninteresting aspects of recent art as "abstract illusionism," although chronological completeness did not seem a goal of the show in other areas.

Robert Morris, Don Judd, Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol and Claes Oldenburg were crowded into spaces ridiculously out of proportion to their work's size or to their own stature, while minor color painters, such as Poons has become or Olitski always was, are given endless space. Here anyone who follows the art market can sense the perniciously pervasive order of Clement Greenberg. Or perhaps Geldzahler is chastising himself, and the artists, for what he now considers his own poor judgment in the past. Having decided (with a little help?) that Pop Art was "only an episode" and that therefore its adherents did not make the "deflector" category, but still embarrassed to leave them out of the show, given his previous enthusiasm, he seems to have decided instead to make the work look as weak as possible. This is particularly evident in the case of James Rosenquist, for whom Geldzahler only two years ago had gone out on a limb by showing *F-111* at the Met (though now it seems that the alliance may have been less to the artist than to the collector). Rosenquist's *Nomad,* a canvas with a three-dimensional extension on the floor, was virtually hidden behind his sculpture, *Tumbleweed,* in what should get the Whitney Annual Prize for Abysmal Installation of the Decade.

One would never suspect from this show that 1960-70 was the decade of a "sculptural renaissance," when innumerable painters moved into three-dimensional art and a new non-decorative, dematerialized art emerged. The facts are either unknown or distasteful to Mr. Geldzahler, for the treatment of sculpture in this exhibition was most notable for its absence. The little sculpture that got into the exhibition was installed up against the wall and/or against paintings like substitutes for potted plants, or set on badly made, ill-proportioned bases. Some good sculptors were omitted (Ferber, Hare, Bourgeois, Nevelson, Hague, et al. through Bladen, LeWitt and Andre), and some lesser sculpture by painters was included (Gottlieb, Newman, Olitski). Judd's work was crowded and curiously placed. Morris' 1963 corner piece was badly reconstructed and painted the wrong color gray. The only exception to the general fate of recent sculpture was Dan Flavin, who clearly insisted upon, and received, better treatment than his colleagues, so that his room was a high point. Then there are the last few galleries, which provide what must be one of the great museological anti-climaxes of all time. One is hard put to explain why, after the frantic overcrowding of the pop and minimal sections, the end of the show is devoted to mis-

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cellaneous leftovers—some drawings, some sculpture, another Davis painting, another Olitski, even another Kelly.

Geldzahler's reason for having this show at the Metropolitan is beguilingly simple: "The extent to which even the most radical Modern Art is continuous with and dependent upon tradition can be revealed as never before when that new art is exhibited alongside the art of the past." Nevertheless, anyone who can plow through over 400 works *plus* any part of the Met's traditional collection in one day is probably not seeing *anything* very clearly. Since this is an impossible feat, a trip to the Museum of Modern Art or the Whitney one day, the Brooklyn, Frick or the Met another, is probably the best solution, and we are left with the question: What made the Metropolitan take on a contemporary art show of this scale when its interest in recent American art has been, to put it politely, limited, and hardly successful? It couldn't have been merely a desire to compete with the Museum of Modern Art, which is having a hard enough time coping with the present itself. Geldzahler's show followed a misbegotten counterpart at MOMA last summer which, given the superior intelligence and eye of its curator, William Rubin, could have been the historical show the badly distorted Met show was supposed to be, had not the Modern chosen its own method of distortion-extortion, limiting the contents to works in its own collection, an obvious gambit to fill the gaping lacunae in that collection by cajoling artists of the "first generation" of the New York School to donate major works, by which they in turn would acquire the historical insurance involved in being part of the world's most important modern art collection. The Met, by borrowing, not begging, should have had matters more under control, and the result should have been other than an exhibition of art-political power plays.

But to return to the initial question, Why? It couldn't have been merely to give Xerox a way to spend its money and get its returns in publicity (though the Met has always been susceptible to corporate seduction, *viz.* the Pepsi Cola exhibitions in the 1940's) nor the chance to poke fun at its own masterpieces (*viz.* the Xerox ad for this show depicting the million-dollar Rembrandt, *Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer,* with a Noguchi abstract sculpture placed in front of the canvas, replacing the bust). Nor could it have been just to give Henry Geldzahler something more to do, for both he and his employers seem happy with his record as go-go-between the studio and the world of "real" influence.

I'm afraid the explanation lies in the fact that the Metropolitan, and Xerox, like so many others, consider contemporary art the "light touch," fair game to be handled by lighter-weights, a good gimmick for the Centennial year and an advertising campaign. I doubt very seriously that its directors would turn over an immense

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CLARENCE BROWN* is professor of Russian at Princeton University. He is spending the current year in London to complete a book on the poetry of Osip Mandelstam.

STANLEY KAUFFMANN is the film and theater critic of *The New Republic* and a Visiting Professor of Drama at Yale. His second collection of film criticism will be published later this year by Harper & Row.

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exhibition of, say, medieval art, to someone whose credentials rest largely on social performance,[1] who has written and organized nothing of note (I include the pedestrian handbook on American art and Venice Biennale section which are Geldzahler's major achievements). Not even the catalogue was required to make any substantial statement, despite its nearly 500 pages. Apparently in acknowledgement of the fact that Geldzahler had little to contribute, five major but already well-known and widely disseminated essays written by critics in 1952, 1961, 1962 and 1966 were reprinted, none of which was relevant to the early or late work included in the show. I guess it would have been Utopian to hope that the Met would take the trouble, or money, to commission new essays by these or other critics which would attempt to cope with the entire span of the show, instead of focusing on the central, albeit important, section. If so many of the artists were so unimportant as to be unworthy of critical consideration in the catalogue (from Davis, Albers, Calder or Reinhardt to Rosenquist, Oldenburg, Kelly, Flavin or Judd), why were they included at all?

This show is dismantled by now, and complaints like the above are being forgotten or dismissed as intramural badmouthing. People will remember the beautiful paintings they saw, forget the bad along with their sore feet, and remain ignorant of and perhaps permanently disillusioned with very recent art, forever unaware of the falsified view of an important segment of modern art history they have been handed on a gilded platter. If America's greatest museum can do no better by contemporary art than this unbalanced show and the stilted, voguish introduction to it in the catalogue, then reform is more urgently needed than most people realize.

—LUCY R. LIPPARD

[1] I think it is worthy of note that the opening of the Met show was planned for the first Moratorium day, and was finally called off in response to protest from the artists in the show. The Art Workers' Coalition's initial request that the opening be held on a more honorable date was met by the Museum's blithe response that a "celebration of American art" was right in keeping with the spirit of the Moratorium. It was only after several artists in the exhibition, prodded by letters from the AWC, had notified the Museum that they would not attend the gala opening that the event was postponed, "due to unforeseen circumstances." In other words, only when the social amenities were threatened was the Museum willing to take steps.

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ROGER HOBDELL

Night Horse on the Silk Road

Tell me if anything ever was done. Limestone
Beneath the shining stocking, the Alfa bringing us
To Khotan, making it simple. Under the arch,
I gazed at the printed batik, dyed like plum juice,
Afraid this was her last entrance.
The phone waits beside the ruined sofa.
No way to move that does not sting.
Finding it impossible to tell herself, Soukhi,
Across the welcome brass railing, says
On our ride, she hardly saw the mulberry trees.
Was there any difference?
To begin, she knew I would find if I moved my hand
Beneath the pale gauze pressed by the cushion,
Her petulant brown bum. Much that happened
(We do not arrive but after a long draught,
The butter rotting on the river balcony) happened,
But the steel hair clip, pinning even now
Some white dandruff, allowed no absence
From the present time.

Over the dark field, lighting the grass, the plane
Ran up to the fence. It had been a long way,
The nightdress too hot, the implacable forest
And inside, the beautiful convulsive wringing.

They watched the birds pick insects off the windscreen.
As much as anyone, they had known the camp,
Whispering with little success beneath the bed-netting,
Teased by the flights out. He said "Soon the rains will end."

The weeks together did not ease the situation.
Was she so fragile? Sita, beside the filligree screen,
Looked at her healing legs. When he came through the arch,
Wild macaws shook the damson blossom.

Lying on the linen, she gets in touch by pen,
The car resting by the small hotel.
Perfume, smelling like lilacs, sticks to the body.
The afternoon comes back. Sound of the water running.

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Go round the shell of Khotan, in which I find
The old puzzle almost a friend, the failing bus
Trying to reach the central courtyard.
Through the door, over the silk rug, someone was moving.
Her loaded case was present in the dark.
The diary falls beside the plum tree,
Pointing the loss of last night.
Soukhi, fingering her pendants, feels the skirt
About her legs sustaining the horse,
And says "Blue sky. Blinding sun. So fast I saw
No pattern stamped upon the soft material."
It was as though she knew already
Beneath the frock crushed by the journey,
My naked organ. On our way, the one after the other,
The station, dismount and on another,
The stuffing falling from the carriage seat, we slowly went.
But the dream, that somewhere present holds
The damaged skin, will not let slip her chance
To overwhelm me once again tonight.

Across the dusty street, holding the sequence,
She could pick him out from the competitors.
She leant against her door, sweating too much
At the nameless days to come.

Inevitably, her hair was black and of course unlit.
All those memories within: river noises,
Letters, burning, pretending to say No,
Excited dogs awaiting the leash.

Like a mowed lawn, the green and gold threads.
She pursed her lips, prolonging the bath.
Throughout the night they would be at the puppets.
He would find no grain in the folds of her young skin.

The leather riders were almost upon her.
Much larger now, wearing those monstrous caps,
They trampled the grass. The shouting was in her ears.
At this moment she would say "Come inside."

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Step over the blue-fly, still iridescent
On the worn flagstone, as I come closer
To the aging limousine. Beneath the sheets,
Impressed with her hot body, the brilliant batiste.
My fears were real: she knew the road well
That served and failed the whole State.
Filled with nostalgia, I saw my old cup.
Soukhi, unable to answer, smiling over the table
As she prepared the mushrooms, thought how quickly
It had happened, the room in the village, the gnats
Making no distinction between us.
She had guessed I would need in my position
So far from the gossamer stuff I would not tear,
Her swelling thighs, but before we could make Khotan
(Crushed by the numerous images we built,
The battery rapidly discharging) we found rehearsing
On the road the band in their fading jackets.
Among the geckos, they repeated with little purpose
The old piece into the chilling twilight.

She knew as she slipped to the balcony room
He would be waiting in the ritual lamplight.
Layla stared between her legs. There was the delicate path.
Running now, it felt very different, unexplored.

Open the gate the right way, pliant branches,
Knee bruised by the box of make-up.
Sita was well away, engaged in the novel.
Strange to be so held.

Across the library site came the tabla rhythm.
Moving fluidly over the cooling stones, Layla entered,
Saw for the first time the work of restoration,
The place of her performance. The red voile floated off.

Inflammed with mime, she remade the encounter.
The room flickered again for an instant.
The solid arms of his chair stood in the smoke.
At the lamp-glass, a lizard, transfixed.

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Undo the baggage for a thicker blanket. Quarrying beneath
The musty skirt, I find the other dynamo, fresh and black,
Glistening for our journey under the canopy.
A touch would bring the pretty circuit to life.
In my hands growing cold, the brief article,
Though I remember a vivid, billowing evening,
The evidence spilling warmly off the sofa,
Making inevitable my surrender.
Feeling only now her defences, Soukhi hid
Behind her own fur, knowing, like this with the skin split
By riding, denim could no longer bite her in the crotch.
She had seen I was pleased she could wear the velvet gift
Over the abandoned tenancies, as she sat
On her dark, shy lips. The many meetings we had
(Jealousy delaying the long embroidery,
Things that were good steaming at the roadside) were had,
But what held us in the car, less cushioned now,
Driven after satisfaction,
Was one appetite.

In her lace apron, Lya brought him the tea things.
Down in the square the stand would be ready,
Children staring at the tumblers.
Was it like this before it began?

It was on the balcony. Spring rain absorbed the whispers.
That night she would spoil him. The foulard
Cracked and roared as she pressed against his ear.
A plane took an age then to reach the hills.

She tried to free her nightdress. Moulded fruit on the ceiling,
This was the coolest room in the city.
Later, in the sedan, begging for it not to stop,
She had guessed in a month he would kill her.

With the same hunger, she returned to the kitchen.
A few bruised plums surviving the journey
Brought back the person, though brief, she made him,
And immediate memories of the Kuen Lun mountains.

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Convince yourself it is not so. Her calves vibrating
Lay across the ditch as we drove in the hotel,
Heightening our pleasure. Seeing through the crack
Impassible to my head, the excitement of fluttering silk,
I was afraid to know what she meant, lying on the bed,
The lamp only masking the bite.
The gash seemed to be everywhere.
Pretending it would not happen, Soukhi held her passport
As I drank my coffee, waiting for the night.
She tried to forget the stained underwear
Confined by habit to her suitcase.
Certain that I was moved, flapping together her sleeves
Encrusted with beads of moisture, she groped with little cries
In my trousers. The scenes we passed,
(The mules mounting, so many laughing villagers,
The sucking fish that laboured on the boards) are lost.
The last, ancient parting
Begins at this point, tearing the serigraph,
Finishing the flight now and tomorrow.

Allowing no absence from the present time,
The steel hair clip pins even now
Some white dandruff, though much that happened
(The butter rotting on the river balcony,
The long draught before the arrival) happened.
She knew her petulant brown bum
Beneath the pale gauze pressed by the cushion
Would be found if I moved my hand.
Was there any difference?
On our ride, hardly seeing the mulberry trees,
Soukhi, across the welcome brass railing,
Found it impossible to tell herself.
No way to move that does not sting.
Beside the ruined sofa, the phone waits.
Afraid this was her last entrance,
Dyed like plum juice, I gazed at the printed batik
Under the arch. Making it simple, the Alfa had brought us
To Khotan, limestone beneath the shining stocking.
Tell me if anything ever was done.

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GIUSEPPE UNGARETTI

Little Monologue

—*Translated by* CHARLES TOMLINSON

Under the rinds of trees, as through a vacancy,
Sap is astir already, winding
In a delirium of branches-to-be-budded:
Uneasy in his sleep, winter
Telling February the reason
Why it must stay short; and moody
Though he may be, he is no longer
Secretively cheerless. As if
Over some biblical calamity,
To all appearances, the drop lifts
Along a shore which from that moment
Seeks to repopulate itself:
From time to time, abrupt, re-emerging
Tower follows tower;
In search of Ararat once more
Wanders the ark, afloat through solitudes;
They are climbing up to limewash the dovecotes.
Snow shifts from over the bramble stocks
Across Maremma
And
Near and far, a continuous
Cheeping whispering spreads through the air
Where birds brood;
Speeding from Foggia
To Lucera the car
Disquiets with its headlamps
Foals in their stalls;
In Corsica's mountains, at Vivario,
Men sitting out the night about the fire
Under the room's kerosene light,
With blanched and shaggy beards
Above hands heavy on sticks,

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Chewing unhurried pipes, they are listening
To Ors' Antone sing
Accompanied by the murmur of the *rivérgola*
Vibrating between the teeth
Of the boy Ghiuvanni:

Your fate is as glad-
Hearted as mine is sad.

Outside a trampling of feet
Looms louder, mingled with the howls and gurgling
Of swine they bring to be butchered, and butchered
They are, for tomorrow
Carnival begins, and still
Through the windless air it goes on snowing.
Forsaken, behind three
Minute parish churches,
Assembled in ranks across the slope
Roofs red with tiles
The newest houses
And,
Covered in washing
The oldest almost invisible
In the confusion of the dawn,
The fragrant forest
Of Vizzavona is crossed
Without our ever being aware through the windows
Of its larches save for their trunks,
And seen only in scraps,
And
There is the time
We climbed out of the Levant through mountains
And the windings meandered even in the driver's voice:

There was sun here, there shadow, shadow there,

On he follows, repeating it to himself
And whether east or west
Always mountains, and worse—
Where the knot of mountains begins to alternate—
The spread of seclusion:

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Is there no term to the tedium of it?
And,
At more than a thousand
Feet the car takes for its track
A road hacked through the chain
Narrow, icy
Leaning over a chasm.
The sky is a sky of sapphire
And wears that clear colour
Which in this month belongs there,
February colour,
Colour of hope.
Down, down until it reaches
To Ajaccio, such a sky
As numbs one but not because it is cold,
Because it is sibylline.
Down, down the unending
Incline until it encompasses
A dark sea in whose
Hidden windings a continual
Roaring is stifled, and the processionals
Of Neptune flow forth.
It sails on into Pernambuco
And,
Alongside rocking skiffs,
And hesitant lighters
Over the lustre and elasticity of the water
Thrusts into the tiny port
The dark and nimble presence of its blade.
Everywhere, up ships' stairs,
Through crammed streets,
On the steps of trams,
One meets with nothing that is not dancing
Whether thing, beast or person,
Day and night, and night
And day, because it is Carnival.
But at night they dance best,
When, hazardous amid the gloom,
Between sky and ground, hail down

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From the whirling of fireworks, flowers of fire—
Accomplices of the night,
Multiplying its ambiguities,
Speckling the livid sea.
All are suffocating with heat.
The equator is a couple of steps away.
Hardship harried the man from Europe
Who must accustom himself
To the upside-down seasons,
And by making his blood
More mixed than ever:
Is not February the month for grafting?
And still more did he suffer
When his blood turned mulatto
In that accursed coupling
Of human souls with the labour of slaves;
But, on southern ground,
He found at last that he could oppose
To the glare of those dog days
The stare of his own more unexpected mask.
And now he will never cease to charm
This false February
And,
Putrid with sweat and stench,
Rolling their eyes they dance without pause
Raucously, unendingly singing
With the intent ingenuousness of the place:

O irony, irony
Was all he used to say.

Recollection is the sign of age
And today I have recalled
A few halting places in my long stay
On earth that fell in February,
Because in February, I grow
More watchful than in other months
For what may follow.
I am more bound to it
Than to my own life

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By a birth
And by a grief;
But now is not the time to speak of that.
And in this month I too was born.
It was stormy, rain never ceased to fall
That night in Alexandria.
The Shi'ite Moslems were holding their festival
Of moon amulets:
A child on a white horse gallops by
And the people throng around him
Drawn spell-bound into the circle of prophecy.
Like Adam and Eve they seem, stupefied
By the fate which has tied them to the earth:
Ear sharpens now
For divinations,
And a woman out of the mob of Arabs
Rears up, gesticulates where
Lightning on a rock has clawed a form,
And with foaming mouth bears witness:

A prophet, still shapeless in the granite
Is outlining the grasp of his terrible arm;

But my mother, woman
Of Lucca that she is,
Laughs at such tidings
And with a proverb replies:

If in February each pathway's awash, that's sure sign
It is plumping the cobbles with oil and with wine

Poets, poets, we have put on
All the masks; yet one
Is merely one's own self.
With terrible impatience
In that vacancy of nature
Which falls every year in February, we have set
For ourselves a limit on the calendar:
The day of Candlemas
With the re-emergence from shadow
Weak tremor of tiny flames

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Where small candles burn
Of unpurified wax,
And the day, after some weeks,
Of *Thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return*;
In the vacancy, and because of our impatience
To emerge from it,
Each one, and we
Old men too with our regrets,
And none knows
Unless he prove it for himself
How illusion can
Throttle a man
Who lives by regret alone;
Impatient in the vacancy, each one
Raves, futile, wears himself out
To be reborn in some fantasy,
Some vanity,
And terror comes of it,
Time is too swift varying its deceits,
That we should ever take warning from it.
Dreams should be fit
Only for boys: they possess
The grace of candour
That heals after all corruptions, once it renews
Or changes at a breath the voices within.
But why boyhood
And suddenly recollection?
There is nothing, there is nothing else on earth
But a gleam of truth
And the dust's vacuity,
Even if, with incorrigible madness
The living man seems to strain
Toward the lightning flash of mirages
In innermost depth and deed
Again and again.

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JOHN GARDNER

Desire on Sunday Morning

1

What shall I do, Old Crusher, with this
hoot-owl heart's *I want*? Nothing.
I know. Write verses, squeak at my weakness,
beat my flesh, like some fool monk, with chains.
Chains cannot slash the part that harms:
It's not the back, or chest, or arms
that mishmash will and flesh.

A woman sits on a kitchen stool,
prim, though I kissed her once, and now
would offer a real deal on my soul.
In the livingroom my wife and the husband move
past chitchat, inexcusably.
Nevertheless, he is not why
I curse myself for a fool.

While he desires what's mine, I steal
what's his, but with averted eyes;
revealing nothing, I reveal
my wolfish love by lizard subtleties.
Lady, do not be distressed. I love
sixteen more with the same hot love.
Call it poetic zeal.

All that I look at cruelly infects:
my son's smile, my daughter's eyes,
galloping mares with arching necks,
the smokey green where the long, curved valley lies—
my eyes shy off the earth in fright:
desire makes my belly light.
All my days are wrecks.

Oh, I believe in Plato's forms:
I've felt them all in my shaky guts.
My mind aspires to cold museums

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where the Beautiful, like Truth and Goodness, sits
in a glass case. But I live here
where beauty starts up there and there
in driving firestorms,

and I must turn my smarting eyes
to those loves I'm committed to,
must love where nothing satisfies
but death, if worms, like higher forms, are true;
must somehow regulate my pulse
to the wise half-truth and the holy false
of morbid compromise.

2

We must climb out of this, Old King,
troubled ghost with the sword wound,
risen again from my childhood understanding:
gentle-hearted, heavy-brained
dead guide, I know you, yes: man-myth
come to save us from life and death
by doubtful beckoning.

All this world is holy. I agree.
And we, by your ghastly metaphor,
are proved to be born innocent and free,
as glorious as the gods were
when Eden was an empty grove
and apes had not yet thought to grieve
nor snakes learned jealousy.

I sort the scraps of dead ideas—
an image, a word, a platitude
from Socrates or Paul—and find no peace.
She talks of Art. I brood and nod
and wait, though I expect no sign,
no pentecost of flesh or mind
to make us burn or freeze.

Still the devouring heart peeks out,
would die for all—be Negro once,
a cow another time, at last a god. . . .

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So slight a thing, omnipotence:
a crafty carpenter's device.
The fraud could not be pulled off twice—
the cool, magnificent fraud!

When Maud Gonne's husband died, old Yeats
rushed to her house. She let him in
and when he proposed, Maud Gonne, her eyebrows raised,
said to someone, "Mr. Yeats will take gin."
No doubt the poor old devil grieved.
Nevertheless, he drank, and saved
them both from sillier fates.

Then again, this—the classic course:
Keep clear. Like those old Puritans
who howled, bug-eyed, and padlocked theater doors
where kings stage-hissed of vulgar sins
and Johnson's genitals would quiver,
pluck out mine eyes and banish forever
the glittering, tiresome curse.

No. I know the power of lust
and my brotherhood with things at the zoo.
But I touch my glasses gingerly and trust
that men have some slight kinship, too,
with things divine—the glass cases
where old, incorporeal faces
study the glowing dust.

The room we talk in hums with wings.
Coming too late to be gods or clowns,
we talk of Art, and War, and other things,
hovering, balanced like twin moons;
neither scoffing at man made god
nor making farce of the fire in mud,
we kiss and part like kings.

3

Kings. You laugh. What elegant machines
I build for making goods out of stupid griefs!
The tin wheels shatter. All my lines

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turn cold as old theologies
and then once more I see mere rhymes
have slipped me away to pretty dreams
that lullabye my brains.

Like maddened flesh we kissed and broke away,
mocked like pigs by brainless *élan vital,*
and understood our vast absurdity—
our foolish end in the same dull law
that drives some South American fish
to trees, a madhouse-tropics wish
to gulp the poisonous sky.

No more, I hoped. All joy to the fatuous turds
who scoff at the old morality we sweat,
call *lust, betrayal, pain* dead words
and sneer, "The Virgin Christ rules yet!"
But pain still rules the world; and lust,
stupid, insane, bursts lifeless dust
and splatters it out to the stars.

We ride the explosion out and can no more turn
its course than twist our missile off its ring;
yet we, with our second thoughts, are torn,
projecting limits, remembering
with minds too dim for the quick ape's yells
(between the wave and the particle falls . . .)
old childhood vows forsworn.

In the dark beside a glassy, polluted lake
I bragged of being a saint. Your jaw grew tight.
I understood pretty well my mistake.
One cannot make life art at night,
when the chest grieves what the mind rejects
and plans lurk, like sunken rocks,
where not a ripple breaks.

(I'll whisk you away from this to another town
the same as this, and men will writhe for you
and whisk you away to another town,
and another, falling away from view

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as stars fall, darkening, through Time,
your white hair floating as in a dream—
but not now, love; not now.)

And yes: I am a slave to metaphors.
I do not believe in milleniums-old museums
hanging, say, just north of Mars.
I believe in the tropical blood's drums
and the brain's pale considerations
frail as sticks raised up where oceans
smash down granite doors.

I believe in sense; but only a fool or child
believes mere sense a match for the crushing blood.
We slide on seas we never willed
when all our reckonings are dead.
Therefore I firm what the brain says
with a desperate rattle of images
and so creep back to the world.

4
You told of a dream—all flutter gone
from the sail, the shoreline dark with trees.
You and Bob and your first two sons
camped, some mountainous, lonely place;
those in the cabin above came down,
invited you up to rest.

You talked, played cards; your two sons slept.
And then, when you went in, they were gone.
You looked for them. It began to get late.
You were frightened. You followed a mountain stream
more bright than life, sun-fire at twilight,
brighter than any real sun,

and by that water charged with light
you found a shoe with the sole gone,
lodged between rocks, the foot inside,
and Bobby's body slanted down,
head covered, still, the hand reaching out
to Mike's shirt, and—face down,

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motionless in the water—Mike
hung floating, still arms floating out.
You wakened, all hope gone, and sobbed
and could not stop or talk of it
for a long time, and said when you could,
"What if they really were dead?"

You understood forever then
the worth of what love's art calls good,
and would not be consoled again
by talk of a Plan or of thanking God
for all the sunny pictures gone.
"Why were they born?" you said.

Lady, gentle emotion machine,
engineered by Time and Space,
not wilfully—result of a gene
obstructed, fallen to a wrong place—
rejoice a while, then mourn what's gone:
earth survives by waste.

5
A woman lay beside me once on a dock
(this was before I knew of the vision-dream);
it was night: stars cold as the works of a giant clock
hung over us, and we lay outside Time
and I was afraid, grieved. Intelligence
cannot withstand the moment's violence.

The everlasting forms the mind creates
second by second, wither like stranded fish
when past and future vanish, and all earth's space
zeroes in to the volume of aching flesh.
My children, hers, my childhood-sweetheart wife
dimmed, died out like talk of the afterlife.

I'd be thirty-five next day, halfway to the grave,
it came to me; and all the images
by which I trick my blood gave a start, backed off,
left me alone once more to confront what is.

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The antique crusher climbed up through my chest;
I turned, kissed her, closed my hand on her breast.

I would not care to have that time turned back.
I seized the secret plans that were always there
and said, "Let's swim to the point." She dove from the dock,
I followed. And yet I did not swim to her.
No reason. Nor am I proud of it. I swam
out and out till I knew I could drown, then home.

You see how it is: no hope in images.
A woman's mouth is an image, and while I muse,
all duty, fixing our lives' realities,
she smiles in the back of my mind, breaks down my walls
of sense, as I do hers. All those I claim
to love become still forms in a shining stream.

I am the stream, the clean ironic sun,
I the figure bent down, staring, on the bank.
I've known before that earth and mind are one,
and heaven's wasteful dark is the mind's same dark.
Desire roars in its caves, the planet turns.
The mind, like hungry blood, rolls on and burns.

Lenten Is Come with Love: An Imitation

Lenten is come with love to town;
On 20th St., the girls dance down
And the tilting sidewalk rings.
The pigeons ponder curbs and cracks
(With purples blinking on their backs)
And every trolley sings.
The old dogs muse and rise and go
And sniff the wrappers by the show
And seek still sweeter things.

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The windowboxes are in bloom
And robins peek in Lucy's room
    With partly opened wings.
New roses fill the flower shops,
With leaves as green as lollypops
    And ribbons gold and white;
The neons shine down clean and hard
Like pansies in the Sanchez' yard,
    Pure as a traffic light.
The ducks in the park are making love
And tomcats preen, below, above,
    And hiss like snakes all night.
The teenage boys are full of rant
And make the fat cops whine and pant
    And say, "Aw right, aw right!"

The moonlight dizzies us like wine,
The sun makes every window shine;
    The newsboys' calls are sweet;
The firemen pull out their trucks
And shine them like a million bucks
    And make the gutters neat.
And worms make love beneath the houses;
Girls get proud, in blowy blouses,
    Sandals on their feet.
Then if I can't make mine come round
I'll walk away without a sound
    And I'll be a man of the street!

Setting for an Old Welsh Line

Stood their king at the helm, hasped in his armor,
piled before him high
blazing rings in the belly of the ship, belts
craftily made of gold, gilt gear that gleamed
like sunlight; helmets, hauberks, battle-axes,

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steel swords to sing, bejewelled. All
a king might need. Without a word to the grieving
he turned his hollow stare to distances.

The falcon sleeps in the oak,
hunched in the evening music of the owl;
the hounds are wolves again, and the pregnant doe
trembles again on the bank. No bugle sounds.
The boar grunts at the darkness under the door;
gray eagles wheel above, and in the grass
the mindless lizard watches, light as a stick.

The ship bears south, old treasure-horde under heaven,
walking the slow waves. The warrior gazes
stone-calm-eyed as dusk. Light shadows tease
the singing deck and rise on the sail; ghosts
of kestrels fly at the helmsman's song,
dark wind on steel. In the high hall,
frail echoes of old songs of dead men's deeds.
The monster stirs in her lair
and lean blue horses paw the snow.
Sparrows rumble in the eaves.

The ship bears south
The lizard, light

The door falls to the wind as the windy hill
will fall, and all things thought in former times:
Nothing made remains, nor man remembers.
And these towns shall be called the shining towns.

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E. M. CIORAN

Encounter with the Void

THE MORE WE PONDER Buddha's last exhortation: "Death is inherent in all compound things. Work relentlessly for your salvation"—the more we are disturbed by the impossibility of *feeling* ourselves an aggregate, a transitory, if not fortuitous combination of elements. We can conceive ourselves thus easily enough in the abstract; but concretely we experience physical revulsion, as if gagging on some indigestible evidence. Until such time as we have conquered this organic reaction, we shall continue to suffer that bane, essentially a jinx, which is the appetite for existence.

We unmask things and stigmatize them with the name of appearances, but to no purpose, for we admit automatically that they conceal being. We will cling to anything sooner than tear ourselves free from this fascination which lies at the source of our acts and very nature, from this primordial effulgence which blinds us to the non-reality inherent in all things.

I am a "being" metaphorically; if I were one in fact, I should remain one forever, and death, devoid of meaning, would cease to hold sway over me. "Work relentlessly for your salvation"—in other words, do not forget that you are a fugitive assemblage, a compound merely waiting to come undone. Indeed, salvation would have no meaning unless we were provisional, to an absurd degree; if there existed in us the slightest factor of duration, we would long ago have been saved or doomed, in either case exempt from questing, from horizons. If deliverance matters, then our unreality is an authentic boon.

*

We should strip being of all its attributes and no longer regard it as a crutch, as the *locus* of all our attachments, the eternal, reassuring dead-end, the most firmly rooted of our prejudices, the one most successfully bred into us. We are accomplices of being, or what we assume to be such, for there is no being, only imitations of it. Even if there were, we should nonetheless have to disengage ourselves from it, extirpate it, considering that whatever

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is evolves into a force of subjection, and an impediment. Let us confer on others the status of shadows; in so doing, we shall separate ourselves from them the more easily. If we are mad enough to believe that they actually *exist,* we lay ourselves open to unspeakable disappointments. Let us be cautious enough to recognize that whatever befalls us, every event, every relationship, is inessential, and that if knowledge exists, its purpose should be to disclose the advantage of moving among ghosts.

Thought, too, is a prejudice and an impediment. It liberates only at the outset, when it enables us to sever certain bonds; afterward, it can only absorb our energy and paralyze our impulses to go free. The happiness one experiences in suspending it offers sufficient proof that it can be of no help whatever. Just like desire, to which it bears a family resemblance, it feeds on its own substance and takes pleasure in asserting itself, multiplying itself; it can occasionally lean toward the truth, but sheer fussing is its typical employment: we think out of liking for thought, as we desire out of liking for desire. Both are a fever in the midst of fictions, an over-exertion inside non-knowing. He who *knows* has risen above the fables perpetrated by desire and thought, he emerges from the current, he no longer acquiesces in sham. Thinking partakes of the bottomless illusion which alike breeds and devours itself, anxious to perpetuate and to consume itself; thinking is a competitor of delirium. In so much fever, only our pauses make any sense, the moments in which we halt to catch our breath: the experience of the void—which is tantamount to the sum of these pauses, these intervals—implies the temporary suppression of desire, for it is desire that plunges us into non-knowing, misleads us, and goads us to project being into everything round about.

The void enables us to lay waste the idea of being without itself falling into the rubble—it thus survives an onslaught which would spell the destruction of any other idea. Actually, it is not an idea at all but the agent which helps us abolish ideas. Every idea represents one more chain: the mind, if it means to achieve withdrawal, must disencumber itself of them, and of beliefs as well. In this we shall succeed only by lifting ourselves above the operations of thought, for so long as thought functions and rages, it camouflages the depths of the void, which come into view directly the fever of mind, of desire, abates.

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Since all our beliefs are intrinsically *shallow,* rooted in appearances, it follows that they exist, indiscriminately, on the same level, in the same measure of unreality. We are so constituted as to live with them, we are compelled to: they form the ingredients of our normal, daily malediction. That is why, when at length we see them for what they are and brush them off, we enter the totally unfamiliar, our mind in an expansive state which makes everything else, by comparison, seem pale, episodic, including this very malediction. Our limits, if any remain, recede. The void—the self without self—amounts to the abolition of that adventure called the "I," it is being without any trace of being, a blessed engulfment, an incomparable disaster.

(The danger lies in making the void a substitute for being, thereby diverting it from its crucial function, which is to sabotage the mechanism of attachment. But if it, too, becomes an object of attachment, then would it not have been better to remain satisfied with being and its retinue of illusions? To undo our bonds, we must, in future, refrain from adhering to anything whatever, anything but the *nothing* of freedom.)

*

Ideally, we would be able to lose, without regrets, all taste for beings and things, each day honoring some creature or object by renouncing it; thus making the rounds of appearances and dismissing each in turn, we would achieve a state of unremitting withdrawal, which is the very secret of joy. Whatever we appropriate, knowledge even more than material acquisitions, only fuels our anxiety; on the other hand, what serenity we enjoy, what radiance once we have abandoned the frantic quest for goods, *including spiritual ones!* Saying "me" is grave enough, but it is a still graver thing to say "mine," for that presupposes a more benighted view, a tightening of the screws that fasten us to the world. The idea that one owns nothing, that one *is* nothing consoles, but the supreme consolation resides in the victory over this very idea.

So stubbornly does anxiety cleave to being, that it must tear itself away if it cherishes hopes of self-conquest. Does it aspire to repose in God? It succeeds only in so far as He stands above being or at least compasses a zone in which being dwindles, rarefies: there, having no footholds, anxiety sets itself free and gravitates

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toward those confines where God, liquidating his last traces of being, surrenders to the temptation of the void.

*

As the Orient has always known, the wise man refuses to make plans, he never *projects*. So you pretend to be a sage of sorts. . . . The fact is, you form projects but balk at executing them. The more you weigh them, the more—having finally renounced them—you experience a sensation of well-being which can swell into ecstasy.

The consequence of non-knowing is that everyone lives in and by projects; this metaphysical obnubilation looms as large as the species. For the enlightened man, becoming and, even more, its constituent acts, are merely a decoy, a hoax generating disgust or fright.

What counts is not producing but understanding. And to understand means to observe the degree of lucidity a being has attained, his capacity for perceiving the sum of unreality inherent in any given phenomenon.

*

Let us hold fast to the concrete and the void, let us proscribe whatever stands between the two: "culture," "civilization," "progress," let us ruminate on the best formula ever conceived here-below: manual work in a monastery. . . . No truth except in physical exertion and in contemplation; the rest is accidental, futile, unhealthy. Health consists in exercise and in vacuity, in the muscles and in meditation; under no circumstances in thought. To meditate is to become absorbed in an idea and to lose oneself in it, whereas to think is to leap from one idea to another, to delight in quantity, to hoard trifles, to stalk concept after concept, goal after goal. Meditating and thinking are separate, indeed incompatible, activities.

Isn't making a rule of the void also a form of pursuit? No doubt, but it involves pursuing the absence of pursuit, aiming at a target which immediately eclipses every other. We live in anxiety because no goal could satisfy us, because, above all our desires, above being as such, there hovers a fatality which necessarily impinges on these accidents we call individuals. Nothing that actualizes itself escapes disgrace. The void—a bound outside this

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fatality—is, like every product of quietism, essentially anti-tragic. Through its mediation, we would learn to rediscover ourselves in backtracking to our origins, to our eternal potentiality. Doesn't it put an end to our desires? But of what account are these desires, taken as a whole, next to a momentary reprieve from them? Happiness does not consist in desire but in its absence or, to be more precise, in our enthusiasm for this absence—when we want to tumble, plunge, disappear, *shout*. . . .

*

When the void itself seems too ponderous or impure, we run helter-skelter towards a nudity beyond any conceivable form of space, while the last instant of time coalesces with the first, and disappears in it.

*

Let us relieve awareness of everything it contains, of all the universes it drags in tow, let us purge it along with perception, let us restrict ourselves to white, forgetting all colors but the one that denies them. What peace prevails immediately one has annulled diversity, immediately one escapes the calvary of nuance and is swallowed up in the *Unvariegated*! Awareness as pure form, then the very absence of awareness.

To evade the intolerable, let us resort to distraction, to flight, let us seek a region in which no sensation deigns to assume a name, and no appetite to incarnate itself, let us win back the primordial repose, let us abolish, along with the past, odious memory but especially awareness, our immemorial enemy whose mission it is to leave us destitute, to wear us down. The Unconscious, on the contrary, is nourishing, it fortifies, it restores us our beginnings, our original cohesion and plunges us again into the beneficent chaos which reigned before the *wound* of individuation.

*

Nothing matters: a major discovery if ever there was one, which people have never succeeded in turning to good account. Only the void, whose motto it is, can give an exalting twist to this reputedly depressing conclusion, only the void endeavors to convert the negative into the affirmative, the irreparable into the possible. There is no *self,* this we know, but our knowledge is

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riddled with afterthoughts. Happily, the void is there to stand in for the self when it vanishes, it stands in for everything, it answers our expectations, it assures us of our non-reality. The void is the abyss without vertigo.

Instinctively we tend toward the self; everything in us demands it: it satisfies our requirements of continuity, solidity. Flying in the face of evidence, it confers upon us an atemporal dimension: there is nothing more normal than our clinging to it, even when we question its existence and expose its fraudulence, for the self is the *reflex* of every living creature. . . . Nevertheless, it appears to us inconceivable directly we view it coldly: it fritters away, it vanishes, it is nothing but the symbol of a fiction.

Our first impulse carries us toward the intoxication of identity, toward the dream of indistinction, toward the *atman* which answers our deepest, our most secret appeals. Once sober, we instantly recoil, we abandon the *putative* foundation of our being in favor of the fundamental destructibility; our knowledge and experience of the latter, our disciplined obsession with it, conducts us to nirvana, to *plenitude* in the void.

*

Because it offers us the illusion of permanence, because it makes promises it cannot keep, the idea of the absolute is suspect, if not pernicious. Infected through and through, in no way made to last, perishable to our very core, we need therapy, not consolation. The absolute does not solve our quandaries, nor does it put an end to our ailments: it is merely an expedient and a tranquilizer. The doctrine that advocates it holds true only so long as it restricts itself to analysis and denounces appearances; no sooner does it pit some ultimate reality against them, than it inspires doubt. When one quits the domain of the illusory and endeavors to replace it with the indestructible, one slithers into falsehood. If one confronts the void more straightforwardly, that is because one does not pursue it for its own sake, for the truth it is reputed to contain, but for its therapeutic virtues; it is converted into a cure, one fancies that it will adjust the mind's oldest warp, namely, the supposition that something exists. . . .

Shaken animal that he is, man has graduated beyond the stage of satisfying himself with "hopes"; he is waiting not for one more placebo but for deliverance. Who will bring it? On this

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score, the only one of significance, Christianity proved less helpful than Buddhism, and western speculation less effective than eastern. Why waste our time over abstractors deaf to our cries or saviours spoiling to salt our wounds? And what can we expect from that segment of the world which sees in the contemplative man an abulic and in the lucid man an *écorché*?

We need a redemptive shock. It is incredible that Aquinas could view stupor as an "obstacle to philosophical meditation" when it is precisely when "stupefied" that one begins to *understand,* that is, to perceive the inanity of all "truths." Stupor bewilders us the better to awaken us: it lays us open, it delivers us to the essential. A full-blown metaphysical experience is nothing but uninterrupted stupor, triumphant stupor.

*

To be incapable of baring oneself to the purifying void, the appeasing void, is a sign of indigence. We are so deeply mired in our philosophies as to have evolved nothing better than a sordid version of the void: nothingness. Into it we have projected our uncertainties, all our ills and terrors, for what is nothingness, ultimately, but an abstract complement of hell, the performance of outcasts, the last-ditch effort at lucidity mustered by creatures unequipped for deliverance? Too corroded by our impurities to serve us as a springboard toward some virgin concept, the void for example (which does not bear the onus of hell, which is not contaminated by it), nothingness is merely a barren extremity, a wrong way out, faintly sepulchral, akin to those efforts at renunciation which turn sour for being exposed to nostalgia.

The void is nothingness stripped of its negative attributes, nothingness transfigured. Once we have tasted it, our relations with the world are thereby modified, something in us changes; although we remain our fallible selves, we no longer *belong here* in precisely the same way as before. That is why having recourse to the void during temper tantrums can prove salutary; our worst impulses are blunted on contact with it. For lack of it, who knows? we might now be languishing in prison or in some padded cell. Furthermore the lesson in abdication which it offers invites us to deal with our enemies, our slanderers, from a more strategic vantage point. Shall we kill them, or spare them? Which is more damaging, more painful: vengeance or triumph over

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vengeance? Where does one draw the line? In our uncertainty, let us prefer the agony of not avenging ourselves.

That is the ultimate concession one can make, short of being a saint.

*

Only he who finds himself oppressed by the universality of anguish is ripe for deliverance. To attempt to set oneself free without being aware of this anguish amounts to impossibility, or vice. There is no such thing as gratuitous deliverance; one must deliver oneself from something, in this case from the nagging ubiquity of the intolerable—which one feels alike in the hypothesis of being and of non-being, since things and their semblances are equally painful. But the hypothesis of vacuity offers, *malgré tout,* one advantage: it brings to light the exaggeration of anguish, the discrepancy between the stature it assumes and the puniness of its cause. One always torments oneself to excess, whether this world be real or not. To be sure, most people do not know the extent of their suffering. It is the privilege of awareness to descry the hideous, to identify the piercing illusion which beings are heir to.

What is true of Christian salvation is also true of deliverance: a certain theologian, with outrageous naïveté, believes in redemption while denying original sin; but if sin is not consubstantial to humanity, what meaning can one ascribe to the advent of the redeemer, what did he come here to redeem? Our corruption, far from being accidental, is permanent, immemorial. And no less so is iniquity: wrongly taxed with being "mysterious," it is a piece of evidence, indeed there exists nothing more *visible* here-below, where setting things aright would require a new saviour for each generation, for each individual rather.

*

When one ceases to desire, one straightaway becomes a citizen of all worlds and of none; desire *places* the individual—having transcended it, he is no longer from anywhere and no longer has reason to envy anyone, either the saint or the ghost.

Desire does not absolutely preclude happiness, but beatitude is another matter; it can flower only in the debris of broken relationships. For its sake, the hermit destroys all his ties, and himself.

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Cow urine was the only medicine monks had permission to use in the early Buddhist communities. A most sensible measure. If one covets peace, one will attain it only in rejecting whatever may cause trouble, whatever man has grafted onto his original simplicity, his original health. Nothing speaks of our fall more eloquently than the spectacle of a drugstore: remedies for every ailment but the essential one, which no human nostrum will ever cure.

*

If the belief in one's *uniqueness* derives from an illusion, let us agree that that illusion is so global, so imperious, there are grounds for wondering whether we can still call it an illusion. How to withdraw from that which we shall never encounter again, from the scandalous, pitiful nonentity bearing our name? The illusion in question, the source of all the torments we must endure, is so embedded in us, to get rid of it would require a sudden gust carrying off our self, leaving us *alone,* without anyone, without ourselves. . . .

We cannot, alas, nullify our desires; we can only undermine them, compromise them. We are immobilized by the self, the poison of the "I." When we escape it, or imagine we have, then we are entitled to those big words used by mystics, true and false alike. There exists no such thing as total conversion: one converts *with one's own nature.* Even after the Illumination, Buddha was only Siddhartha Gotama, *fortified with knowledge.*

Everything one thinks one has suffocated revives after a while: defects, vices, obsessions. The most patent flaws, presumably "corrected," return disguised, but just as annoying as before. The pains one took to rid oneself of them will not have been completely unavailing. A given desire, long since ejected, reappears, but we *know* that it has, it does not exercise us secretly, nor does it take us unawares—it dominates us, subjugates us, we are still its slaves to be sure, but non-consenting slaves. Every *conscious* sensation is one which we have combatted unsuccessfully, but its victory is a Pyrrhic one for, by winning, it has routed itself from our innermost life.

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On every occasion we have taken the easy path, choosing God or his surrogates, in any case *people,* to have someone to chat or argue with. For contemplation we have substituted tension, thus creating between the divinity and ourselves vexingly personal ties. Only men who seek but do not wish to *find* have managed to become virtuosi of the inner drama. The great modern discovery is *spiritual malaise,* the rupture between substance and vacuity, or to be more precise, the simulacra of each. Whence the cult of singularity in every domain. In literature, an uncommon error is worth more than a truth proven, known, accepted. The anomalous, on the contrary, has no value on the spiritual plane where only the depth of an experience counts.

According to the *Bhagavadgita,* he who is "a prey to doubt," the same doubt Buddhism as well lists among the five obstacles to salvation, is lost to this world and to the next. Doubt is not a deepening but a stagnation, the vertigo of stagnation. In its grip, one cannot make headway and achieve one's purpose; it is a gnawing, nothing more. When you imagine yourself at a safe remove, it suddenly yawns before you, and the cycle of fall and laborious ascent recommences. It must *explode* before the direction to freedom will become apparent. Without such violence, devastating even the most legitimate reasons for doubt, one lingers indefinitely in malaise, one cultivates it, one avoids major decisions, one devours oneself, and takes pleasure in so doing.

*

He who sets store by his name and his work, still more he who dreams of a name or a work, the quixotic person in short, is immune to the passion for utter self-effacement. If he persists in seeking salvation, he will at best *bog down* in nirvana. . . .

*

One cannot imagine a *bitter* mystic. Knowledge as the world reckons it, clairvoyant dryness, an excess of lucidity lacking interior dimension, bitterness is the attribute of people who, having cheated in their relations with the absolute and with themselves, no longer know to whom and where to turn. It is, for all that,

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more common than one would think, it is normal, quotidinal, everybody's lot. Joy, on the other hand, the fruit of an exceptional hour, seems to spring from some imbalance, a mechanism gone haywire in the most private area of our being, so flagrantly does it contradict the multiple evidence in whose midst we live. Could it possibly come from *elsewhere,* from beyond ourselves? It is dilation, and dilation always partakes of another world, whereas bitterness is contraction, even if the infinite looms in the background. But an infinite that crushes rather than liberates.

No, it is scarcely conceivable that joy should throw one off balance, and even less conceivable that it should come from nowhere; it is so full, so enveloping, so marvelously unbearable, that one would not be able to face it without some supreme reference. In all events, it alone makes it possible to entertain the notion that man could forge gods out of some need for *gratitude.*

*

One can readily imagine in what terms a man of today would speak if called upon to make a pronouncement on the only religion ever to have introduced a radical formula of salvation:

"The quest for deliverance can be justified only if one believes in the transmigration, in the endless vagrancy of the self, and if one aspires to halt it. But for us who do not believe in it, what are we to halt? This unique and negligible duration? It is obviously not long enough to deserve the effort an escape would require. For the Buddhist, the prospect of other existences is a nightmare; for us, the nightmare consists in the termination of this one, this nightmare. Give us another one, we would be tempted to clamor, so that our disgraces will not conclude too soon, so that they may, at their leisure, hound us through several lives.

Deliverance answers a necessity only for the person who feels *threatened* by a surfeit of existence, who fears the burden of dying and redying. For us, condemned not to reincarnate ourselves, what's the use of struggling to set ourselves free from a nonentity? to liberate ourselves from a terror whose end lies in view? Furthermore, what's the use of pursuing a supreme unreality when everything here-below is *already* unreal? One simply does not exert oneself to get rid of something so flimsily justified, so precariously *grounded.*

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Each of us, each man unlucky enough not to believe in the eternal cycle of births and deaths, aspires to a superabundance of illusion and torment. We pine for the malediction of being reborn. Buddha took exorbitant pains to achieve what? *definitive* death—what we, on the contrary, are sure of obtaining without meditations and mortifications, without raising a finger." . . .

That's just about how this fallen man would express himself if he consented to lay bare the depths of his thought. Who will dare throw the first stone? Who has not spoken to himself in this way? We are so addicted to our own history that we would like to see it drone on and on, relentlessly. But whether one lives one or a thousand lives, whether one has at one's disposal a single hour or all of time, the problem remains the same: an insect and a god should not differ in their manner of viewing the fact of existence *as such,* which is so terrifying (as only miracles can be) that, reflecting on it, one understands the will to disappear forever so as not to have to consider it again in other existences. This is what Buddha emphasized, and it seems doubtful he would have altered his conclusion had he ceased to believe in the mechanism of transmigration.

*

To discover that all things lack foundation and continue to exist is only an apparent inconsistency: carried to an extreme, perception of the void tallies with perception of the all, it amounts to *entrance* into the all. One begins at last to *see;* done with groping, one is reassured, bolstered. If there exists some chance of salvation outside faith, it must be sought in the faculty of *enriching* oneself on contact with unreality.

Even if the experiment of the void were a mere hoax, it would still be worth trying. What it proposes, what it attempts to do, is annihilate death and life with the single aim of making them tolerable. If it succeeds on occasion, what more can we ask? Without it, there is no remedy to the illness of being, no hope of recovering, if only for brief instants, the primeval bliss, the light of pure anteriority.

[*Translated by Frederick Brown*]

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OSIP MANDELSTAM

Fourth Prose

Introductory Note

A GREAT DEAL OF WHAT Osip Mandelstam (1891-1938) wrote either is or has the effect of being a fragment, some part of a larger whole that kept forever coming apart. The whole was his life, the poems and other writings its scattered members.

Like *The Noise of Time* and *The Egyptian Stamp,* his *Fourth Prose* is a blend of fiction and autobiography. It is different from them in that it was never published while he was alive, and it has never been published in Russia. It scarcely has a title. Nadezhda Yakovlevna, the poet's widow, told me that *Fourth Prose* was simply a kind of household nickname: if one takes *Noise* as first, *Stamp* as second, and the critical writings together as third, then this is fourth. The numeral appealed to him on other grounds as well. It carried overtones of "fourth estate," a term that Mandelstam vastly preferred to the despised "literature" as the focus of his allegiance. I was told that the author had destroyed the original first chapter. Why, I do not know.

The story behind *Fourth Prose* is that of a sordid defamatory campaign against Mandelstam. The facts are immensely involved, and obscured by the passage of time, but in outline they are as follows. At the end of the 1920's Mandelstam, who had been publishing his poetry and criticism for some two decades, was at the height of his fame. On the grounds of his poetry he was for the moment nearly invulnerable. But he belonged to that camp of free intellectuals and artists whose sympathies, always on the side of the Revolution, had never been with the Bolshevik's brutal perversion of the dream; and he was thus, with many others, the constant object of attack, usually private, behind the scenes in writers' organizations and editorial offices, but also, as in the present case, public. Since about the middle of the Twenties, Mandelstam had been driven to support himself and buy time for his real concerns by a backbreaking load of literary hackwork—as publisher's reader, reviewer, interviewer, consultant, translator. Prob-

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ably no writer of our time, except possibly Ezra Pound, has had a higher conception of the writer's calling, his obligations to his art and to his reader. One can only imagine his exertions, as he ploughed through the general literary muck from which he wrested a living, to keep what he could of his artistic standards or to salvage what could be saved of the work in hand. In one letter of 29 June 1928 we find the poet, whose wife was ill and had just undergone an operation, helplessly begging a certain Venediktov to send the money promised him for his work on a volume of Mayne Reid! (The most Satanic fancy can seldom match the mere routine of Soviet literature.) The money was being withheld, another document tells us, pending someone's approval of Mandelstam's Mayne Reid.

But even in this arena he was not really vulnerable, and so the occasion for an attack on him had to be manufactured. It was done as follows. The publishing house ZIF (initials for Russian words meaning "Land and Factory") had commissioned him in 1927 to revise and edit two existing Russian versions of Charles de Coster's *La légende de Thyl Ulenspiegel.* These were a version by V. Karyakin, made in 1916, and another by the prominent literary critic A. G. Gornfeld, which had come out in 1920. When his edition appeared in 1928, the unsuspecting Mandelstam was horrified to find his own name on the title page as "translator." Had certain other things not happened recently, this might have seemed nothing more than the habitual sloppiness of the publishers. But there was the abrupt dismissal, on political grounds, from the same publishing house of his old friend and former Acmeist colleague Vladimir Narbut. There were the difficulties about assignments and then about being paid for them. It seemed, and it was, part of a pattern. The ground for the attack had been prepared.

Mandelstam demanded at once that the publisher rectify the error by pasting in a slip with the correct information on the title page, but this was refused. He also telegraphed Gornfeld, explaining the circumstances and offering to turn over to him his own fee, thus taking upon himself a moral responsibility that, in all reason, belonged to the publisher alone. But reason had nothing to do with it. Gornfeld's role is not clear to me. Mandelstam's senior by 24 years, he was not a creature of the new order; his

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career in literary journalism had been, if not brilliant, honorable; as a translator he evidently followed the drudging ideal of literal correctness, which is at least an amiable imperfection. But, leaving aside the question whether he willingly offered himself as a utensil, he did play a rather supine role by printing, in a newspaper where the publisher's belated and more or less *pro forma* explanation had appeared, an attack on Mandelstam. The poet, struggling to live from day to day, was enraged by the figurative charge that he had stolen Gornfeld's fur coat and fenced it at a rummage shop. If Mandelstam despised "authors" and "literature" as he had come to know them in actual fact, he nevertheless cherished a lofty ideal of the writer and of the fellowship of writers: one cannot read his work without a sense of the covenant that he felt to exist between himself and Ovid, Dante, Villon, Goethe, Pushkin, Herzen. Gornfeld's remark about the stolen coat (the charge of plagiarism having not actually been made) seemed to Mandelstam so perfidious and contemptible a thing to have been said by one writer of another that he blazoned it as the epigraph in a letter to the editor where he answered the charges.

In a few months time the persecution of Mandelstam took an alarming turn—even though it was only 1929, that "relatively vegetarian" period in Akhmatova's bitter phrase—with the entry into the matter of David Zaslavsky. In the interval, Mandelstam had written a newspaper article exposing the slapdash treatment of translation and translators in the Soviet press, and Zaslavsky seized upon it as a device for reopening the charges in the *Ulenspiegel* case. Zaslavsky is one of the most odious figures in the history of Stalinist journalism. A reliable scourge, he took a prominent part in campaigns against his own former associates, the Mensheviks, and his co-religionists—in the notorious persecution of the "cosmopolites" after the war. One of his last services to the regime (he died in 1965) was the public savaging of Pasternak during the *Zhivago* affair. Mandelstam, feeling perhaps that Zaslavsky was beneath notice in a dispute involving men of letters, does not even mention him. But his participation may help explain why, in Mandelstam's own household, the whole matter went by the name of "the Dreyfus affair."

Such, in general contour, was the bloated and at times—had it not been so sinister in intent—almost comic personal and political

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campaign against one Russian poet. The *odium sovieticum* spread like a stain through the two capitals. Certain Leningrad writers planned a letter in Mandelstam's defense, then lost their nerve, to his enduring disgust. Moscow writers—among them Vsevolod Ivanov, Pilnyak, Fadeev, Pasternak, Kataev, Fedin, Olesha, Zoshchenko, and Leonov—did publish a warm letter in his defense. An arbitration court of FOSP, the federation of writers' organizations, eventually produced an ambiguous decision: Mandelstam had been treated unfairly, but, on the other hand, the moral fault was his that no suitable arrangement had been made with the earlier translators. The matter might not have ended there, however, had not a powerful protector of Mandelstam, the ill-fated Nikolay Ivanovich Bukharin, intervened. He saw to it that the persecution was stopped, and then he arranged that the poet and his wife be sent on a trip to Armenia.

Armenia was a godsend, but it was *Fourth Prose* that effected, in artistic terms, an even more startling cure. It was a desperate act of self-therapy. By this outburst, Mandelstam seems to have defined himself, and also the "new reality" that now obtained in his country, in a kind of transport of fury. It was an explosion, a scream, a howl of his injured humanity—and, whatever else it may have accomplished, it cleared his lungs. His breathing freed, an awful five-year period of poetic silence, the "deaf-mute" time as he called it, came suddenly to an end. The *Fourth Prose* is what preceded and largely made possible the poems dated "1930" and onwards in his collected works.

—CLARENCE BROWN

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1

VENYAMIN FYODOROVICH KAGAN[1] approached this matter with the sage economicalness of a sorcerer or of some Odessa-born Newton. All the conspiratorial activity of Venyamin Fyodorovich rested upon a basis of infinitesimals. Venyamin Fyodorovich saw the law of salvation as a matter of keeping to a turtle's pace. He allowed himself to be shaken out of his professorial box, answered the telephone at all hours, made no promises in advance, would not say no to anything; but the main thing he did was try to retard the dangerous course of the disease.

The fact that a professor, and a mathematician at that, was involved in the improbable affair of saving five lives by means of those cognizable, absolutely weightless integral moves known as pulling wires, was a source of general satisfaction.

Isai Benediktovich[2] behaved himself from the very first as if the illness were infectious, something catching, like scarlet fever, so that he too, Isai Benediktovich, might, for all he knew, be shot. There was not the least sense in the way Isai Benediktovich bustled about. It was as if he were racing from one doctor to another imploring them to disinfect him at once.

If Isai Benediktovich had had his way he would have taken a taxi and raced all over Moscow at random, without a shadow of a plan, for that, as he imagined, was the ritual.

Isai Benediktovich was forever repeating and constantly recalling that he had left behind him, in Petersburg, a wife. He even set himself up with something like a secretary—a small, stern, very commonsensical companion—a relative who had already begun to fuss over him, Isai Benediktovich, as though he were a child. To make a long story short, Isai Benediktovich, by appealing to various people and at various times, was, so to speak, vaccinating himself against execution.

All the relatives of Isai Benediktovich had died in their Jewish beds of walnut wood. As the Turk travels to the black stone of the Kaaba, so these Petersburg bourgeois, descended from rabbis of patrician blood and, via the translator Isai, brought into touch

[1] A professor of mathematics at Moscow University. Because of his skill as a translator of mathematical literature, he was asked to be an arbitrator in the *Ulenspiegel* case.

[2] I. B. Mandelstam, a translator, no relation to Osip Mandelstam.

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with Anatole France, made pilgrimages to the most unimaginably Turgenevian and Lermontovian watering places where they prepared themselves, by taking the cure, for the transition to the hereafter.

In Petersburg Isai Benediktovich lived like a pious Frenchman, ate his *potage,* chose for acquaintances people no more offensive than the croutons in his bouillon, and, in his professional capacity, made calls on two traffickers in junk translations.

Isai Benediktovich was good only at the very beginning of the wire-pulling, during the mobilization and, as it were, the alarm. Afterwards he faded, drooped, stuck out his tongue, and his relatives themselves pooled their money and sent him to Petersburg.

I have always been interested in the question where the bourgeois gets his fastidiousness and his so-called decency. His decency is what makes the bourgeois kin to the animal. Many Party members are at ease in the company of a bourgeois for the very same reason that grown-ups require the society of rosy-cheeked children.

The bourgeois is of course more innocent than the proletarian, closer to the womb world, the baby, the kitten, the angel, the cherub. In Russia there are very few of these innocent bourgeois, and that has a bad effect on the digestion of true revolutionaries. The bourgeoisie must be preserved in its innocent aspect, it must be entertained with amateur theatricals, lulled on the springs of Pullman cars, tucked into envelopes of snow-white railway sleep.

2

A little boy in goatskin boots and velveteen Russian coat, his hair brushed carefully back, is standing in the midst of mammas, grannies, and nannies, and beside him stands some cook or coachman's whelp, some urchin from the servants' quarters. And that whole pack of lisping, hooting, spluttering archangels is urging the young master on:

"Hit 'im, Vasenka, hit 'im!"

Vasenka gets in a blow, and the old maids, the disgusting old toads, poke each other and hold on to the mangy coachman's brat:

"Hit 'im, Vasenka, hit 'im, while we hold his curly head, while we dance around him . . ."

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What is this? A genre painting in the style of Venetsianov? An etude by some peasant artist?

No, this is the way they train some shaggy shrimp from the Komsomol under the supervision of the agit-mammas, grannies, and nannies so that he can stomp 'im, Vasenka, hit 'im, Vasenka, while we hold him by his black hide, while we dance around . . .

"Hit 'im, Vasenka, hit 'im . . ."

3

The lame girl came in to us from a street as long as a night with no streetcars. She put her crutch to one side and quickly took her seat so as to look like everyone else. Who is this husbandless girl?—The light cavalry . . .

We cadge cigarettes from each other and correct our Chinese gibberish, enciphering in formulas of animal cowardice the great, powerful and forbidden notion of class. Animal fear taps on the typewriters, animal fear proof-reads the gibberish on sheets of toilet-paper, scribbles denunciations, hits men when they're down, demands execution for prisoners. As urchins drown a kitten in the river Moscow in plain view of everyone, so our grown-up boys playfully put the screws on, at noon recess play back-to-the-wall: "Hey, pile on, press till you can't see him any more . . ." Such is the sacred law of lynching.

A shopkeeper on the Ordynka gave a charwoman short weight: kill him!

A cashier came out a nickel short: kill her!

A director foolishly signed some junk or other: kill him!

A peasant hid some rye in a barn: kill him!

The girl comes to see us, dragging along on her crutch. One of her legs is short, and the crude prosthetic boot looks like a wooden hoof.

Who are we? We are school children who do not go to school. We are Komsomol freebooters. We are bully-boys by leave of all the saints.

Filipp Filippich has developed a toothache. Filipp Filippich has not and will not come to class. Our notion of studying has as much to do with science as the hoof with the foot, but that does not embarrass us.

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I have come to you, my artiodactylous friends, to stamp my wooden stump in the yellow socialist arcade-combine created by the frantic fantasy of the daredevil business executive, Giber, from elements of the chic hotel on the Tverskoy, from the night telephone or telegraph exchange, from a dream of universal bliss —realized as a permanent foyer with buffet—from an uninterrupted counter with saluting clerks, from the postal-telegraph aridity of air that makes one's throat tickle.

Here there's an unbroken bookkeeper's night beneath the yellow flame of the second-class bulbs of the railway station. Here as in Pushkin's fairy tale, a Yid is betrothed to a frog, that is to say, there's an endless wedding ceremony between a goat-footed fop, spawning theatrically, and a well-matched devil from the same stew, a Moscow editor-cum-coffinmaker turning out silk brocade coffins for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. He rustles his paper shroud. He opens the veins of the months of the Christian year that still preserve their pastoral Greek names: January, February, March . . . He is the terrifying and illiterate horse-doctor of happenings, deaths and events, and is tickled pink when the black horseblood of the age spurts forth in a gushing fountain.

4

I went to work for the newspaper *Moscow Komsomol Member* straight from the caravanserai of the TSEKUBU.[3] There were twelve pairs of earphones there, almost all of them broken, and a reading room made over from a church, with no books, where people slept like snails on little curved divans.

The servants at TSEKUBU despised me for my straw baskets and because I was not a professor.

In the afternoon I would go look at the high water and firmly believed that the obscene waters of the river Moscow would flood the learned Kropotkin Embankment and that TSEKUBU would telephone for a boat.

In the mornings I would drink sterilized cream right on the street from the mouth of the bottle.

I would take someone else's soap from the professors' shelves and wash myself at night and was never caught once.

[3] An acronym for the committee for the relief of scholars established in 1921.

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People from Kharkov and Voronezh would come and all of them wanted to go to Alma-Ata. They took me for one of their own and asked my advice which republic was the best deal.

Many of them received telegrams from various places in the Soviet Union. One Byzantine little old man was on his way to his son's house in Kovno.

At night TSEKUBU was locked up like a fortress and I would rap on the window with my stick.

Every decent man got his telephone calls at TSEKUBU and in the evening the servants would hand him a note as if giving a priest the list of those to be prayed for. The writer Grin, whose clothes the servants used to brush, lived there. I lived at TSEKUBU like everyone else, and no one bothered me until I myself moved out in the middle of the summer.

When I was moving to another apartment, my fur coat lay across the carriage as it does when people leave the hospital after a long stay or have just been let out of prison.

5

Things have come to the point where I value only the proud flesh around the wound in the word trade, only the insane excrescence:

> And the whole ravine was cut
> To the bone by the falcon's scream

That is what I need.

I divide all the works of world literature into those written with and without permission. The first are trash, the second—stolen air. As for writers who write things with prior permission, I want to spit in their faces, beat them over the head with a stick and set them all at a table in the Herzen House, each with a glass of police tea in front of him and the analysis of Gornfeld's urine in his hand.

I would forbid these writers to marry and have children. After all, children must carry on for us, must say to the end for us what is most important to say. But their fathers have sold out to the pockmarked devil for three generations to come.

Now that's a little literary page.

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6

I have no manuscripts, no notebooks, no archives. I have no handwriting because I never write. I alone in Russia work from the voice while all around the bitch pack writes. What the hell kind of writer am I!? Get out, you fools!

On the other hand, I have a lot of pencils and they are all stolen and of different colors. You can sharpen them with a Gillette blade.

The blade of the Gillette razor with its faintly notched bevelled edge has always seemed to me one of the noblest products of the steel industry. The good Gillette blade cuts like sedge grass, bends but doesn't break in the hand—something like a calling card from a Martian or a note from a dapper devil with a hole drilled in the middle.

The blade of the Gillette razor is the product of a dead trust, the shareholders of which are packs of American and Swedish wolves.

7

I am a Chinaman, no one understands me. Idiot-shmidiot! Let's go to Alma-Ata where the people have raisin eyes, the Persian has eyes like fried eggs, the Sart has sheep's eyes.

Idiot-shmidiot! Let's go to Azerbaijan!

I had a patron—People's Commissar Mravyan-Muravyan,[4] most pissantic People's Commissar of the land of Armenia, that younger sister of the Land of Judah. He sent me a telegram.

Dead is my patron, the People's Commissar Mravyan-Muravyan. Gone from the Erevan anthill is the black People's Commissar. He will no longer come to Moscow in the international car of the train, naive and curious as a priest from a Turkish village.

Idiot-shmidiot! Let's go to Azerbaijan!

I had a letter for People's Commissar Mravyan. I took it to the secretaries in the Armenian residence in the cleanest, most ambassadorial street in all Moscow. I was just on the point of leaving

[4] Askanaz Artemyevich Mravyan was Commissar of Foreign Affairs in Armenia in 1920-1921; from 1923 he headed the education ministry and served as Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars there.

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for Erevan under the auspices of the ancient People's Commissariat of Education to conduct a terrifying seminar for those roundheaded youths in their poor monastery of a university.

If I had gone to Erevan I should have run for three days and three nights to the large buffets in the railway stations to eat buttered bread with black caviare.

Idiot-shmidiot!

On the way I should have read Zoshchenko's[5] very best book and been as happy as a Tartar who'd stolen a hundred roubles.

Idiot-shmidiot! Let's go to Azerbaijan!

I should have taken courage with me in my yellow straw basket with its great heap of linen smelling of alkali soap, and my fur coat would have hung on a golden nail. And I should have got out at the railway station in Erevan with my winter coat in one hand and my senile cane—my Jewish staff—in the other.

8

There is a splendid line of Russian poetry which I never tire of repeating in the bitch-loud nights of Moscow. Which, like a spell, disperses evil spirits. Guess what line, friends. It writes on the snow like sleigh runners, clicks in the lock like a key, shoots into a room like frost:

. . . didn't shoot the wretches in the dungeons . . .[6]

There is the symbol of faith, there is the genuine canon of the true writer, the mortal enemy of literature.

In the Herzen House there is a milksop vegetarian, a philologist with a Chinese noddle, a Chink of that breed that tiptoes about the blood-stained Soviet land twittering *hao-hao shango-shango* when heads are being lopped off, a certain Mitka Blagoy,[7] a piece of trash from the lycée, authorized by the Bolsheviks for the benefit of learning; in a special museum he guards the length of cord with which Seryozha Esenin hanged himself.

And I say: Blagoy for the Chinese! To Shanghai with him! To the Chinks, where he belongs! To think what Mother Philology

[5] Mikhail Zoshchenko (1895-1958), the best and most popular Soviet satirist.
[6] A line by Sergey Esenin, whose suicide in 1925 is mentioned below.
[7] Dmitriy Blagoy, one of the most prominent Soviet literary scholars.

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was and what she has become. Full-blooded and implacable she was, and now she's become fool-blooded and in everything placable.

9

To the number of murderers of Russian poets, or of aspirants to join these murderers, has been added the murky name of Gornfeld. This paralytic D'Anthès,[8] this Uncle Monya from Basseyny Street, preaching morality and the State, carried out the orders of a regime totally alien to himself, which is, to him, more or less the same as a touch of indigestion.

To die from Gornfeld is as silly as to die from a bicycle or a parrot's beak. But a literary murderer can also be a parrot. I, for instance, was nearly killed by a polly named after His Majesty King Albert and Vladimir Galaktionovich Korolenko.[9] I am very glad that my murderer is alive and has in a sense survived me. I feed him sugar and take pleasure in hearing him repeat, from *Thyl Ulenspiegel,* "The ashes are knocking at my heart," a sentence which he alternates with another, no less pretty, "There is no torment in the world greater than the torment of the word . . ." A man capable of calling his book *Torments of the Word*[10] was born with the mark of Cain, as the sign of the literary murderer, on his brow.

I met Gornfeld only once, in the dirty editorial office of some unprincipled rag where, as in the buffet of Kvisisan, a crowd of spectral figures had gathered. There was as yet no ideology then and no one to complain to when you were insulted. When I recall that deprivation—how could we have lived then?!—huge tears well up in my eyes. Someone introduced me to the biped critic, and I shook his hand.

Papa Gornfeld, why did you complain to the *Bourse News,* I mean to the *Evening Red Gazette,* in the year of Our Soviet 1929? You would have done better to weep into the pure literary Jewish waistcoat of Mr. Propper. Better to have told your woe to your banker with sciatica, kugel, and tallith. . . .

[8] Baron Georges D'Anthès killed Aleksandr Pushkin in a duel in 1837.

[9] The writer Korolenko was editor of the journal *Russian Wealth,* to which Gornfeld contributed regularly.

[10] A collection of Gornfeld's critical articles, first published in 1906.

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10

Nikolay Ivanovich[11] has a secretary who is, really and truly, an absolute squirrel, a little rodent. She gnaws a nut with every visitor and runs to the telephone like an inexperienced young mother to a sick baby.

A certain scoundrel told me that truth was *mria* in Greek.

So that little squirrel is genuine truth with a capital letter in Greek; and at the same time she is that other truth, that stern card-carrying virgin—Party truth.

The secretary, frightened and compassionate, like a hospital nurse, does not merely work but lives in the antechamber of the office, in the telephone dressing-room. Poor Mria from the connecting room with her telephone and her classical newspaper!

This secretary differs from others in that she sits like a night nurse on the threshold of power, defending the wielder of that power as if he were gravely ill.

11

No, really, let me be tried! Allow me to enter in evidence! . . . Permit me, as it were, to file myself. Do not, I impore you, deprive me of my trial . . . The legal proceedings are not yet at an end and, I make so bold as to assure you, will never be at an end. What happened before was only the overture. Bosio[12] herself is going to sing at my trial. Bearded students in checkered plaids, mingling with caped policemen and, under the direction of their goat precentor, ecstatically chanting a syncopated version of the Eternal Memory, will carry the police coffin with the remains of my case out of the smoke-blackened hall of the district court.

Papa, Papa, Papochka,
Where, O where's your Mamochka?

The Writers' Union is too close—

[11] Bukharin (1888-1938), whom Lenin called "the most valuable and greatest theoretician of the Party," was editor of *Pravda* (Truth) and a member of the Politburo. For his opposition to Stalin he was expelled from all his Party positions in 1929 and shot in 1938 after a "show trial" of the Great Purge.

[12] Angiolina Bosio, an Italian soprano who sang for several seasons in St. Petersburg, where she died in 1859. There is evidence that Mandelstam once wrote or planned to write a novella entitled "The Death of Bosio." Whether he did is not known, but a passage of his *Egyptian Stamp* is devoted to her.

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She will come back with a dose.

Mama's blind in one eye, right?
And this case is sewn up tight.

Aleksandr Ivanovich Herzen! . . . Allow me to introduce myself . . . It was, it seems, in your house . . . As host, you are in some sense responsible . . .

You were so good as to go abroad, were you? . . . Meanwhile, something disagreeable has happened here . . . Aleksandr Ivanovich! Sir! What am I to do? There is absolutely no one to turn to!

12

In a certain year of my life, grown men from that tribe which I despise with all the strength of my soul and to which I neither wish to belong nor ever shall conceived the intention of jointly committing against me an ugly and repellant ritual. The name of this ritual is literary pruning or dishonoring, and it is performed in accordance with the customs and the calendrical needs of the writers' tribe, the victim being selected by vote of the elders.

I insist that writerdom, as it has developed in Europe and above all in Russia, is incompatible with the honorable title of Jew, of which I am proud. My blood, burdened with its inheritance from sheep breeders, patriarchs and kings, rebels against the shifty gypsyishness of the writing tribe. A creaking camp of unwashed Romanies kidnapped me as a child and for a certain number of years dawdled along its obscene routes, vainly striving to teach me its one craft, its one art: theft.

Writerdom is a race with a revolting smell to its hide and the filthiest known means of preparing its food. It is a race that wanders and sleeps in its own vomit, one that is expelled from cities and hounded in villages, but it is always and everywhere close to the authorities, who grant them a place in red-light districts, as prostitutes. For literature always and everywhere carries out one assignment: it helps superiors keep their soldiers obedient and it helps judges execute reprisals against doomed men.

A writer is a mixture of parrot and pope. He's a polly in the very loftiest meaning of that word. He speaks French if his master

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is French, but, sold into Persia, he will say "Pol's a fool," or "Polly wants a cracker" in Persian. A parrot has no age and doesn't know day from night. If he starts to bore his master he's covered with a black cloth and that, for literature, is the surrogate of night.

13

There were two brothers named Chenier. The despicable younger brother belongs entirely to literature; the elder, who was executed, executed literature himself.

Jailers love to read novels and, of all men, have the greatest need of literature.

In a certain year of my life grown men with beards and wearing horned fur caps brandished a flint knife over me, with which they meant to castrate me. Judging by the evidence, they were priests of their tribe: they smelled of onion, novels, and goatmeat.

And it was all as terrifying as in a child's dream. *Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita*—midway on the path of life—I was stopped in the dense Soviet forest by bandits who called themselves my judges. They were old men with scrawny necks and little goose heads unfit to bear the burden of years.

For the first and only time in my life, literature had need of me, and it crumpled me, pawed me, squeezed me, and it was all as terrifying as in a child's dream.

14

I am morally responsible for the fact that the ZIF Publishing House did not make a contract with the translators Gornfeld and Karyakin. I—furrier of precious furs, and practically suffocated with literary hides—I am morally responsible for having inspired a Petersburg cad with the desire to allude in a libellous anecdote to that warm Gogolian fur coat, torn by night from the shoulders of that most ancient member of the Komsomol, Akaky Akakievich. I tear off my literary fur coat and trample it under foot. In nothing but my jacket and in a thirty-degree frost I shall run three times around the boulevard rings of Moscow. I shall escape from the yellow hospital of the Komsomol arcade straight

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into a fatal chill, if only not to see the forty bright Judas holes of that obscene building on Tverskoy Boulevard, if only not to hear the clinking of the pieces of silver and the counting of the printer's sheets.

15

My dear Romany of the Tverskoy Boulevard, you and I together have written a novel of which you have not even dreamt. I am very fond of coming across my name in official papers, bailiff's subpoenas, and other stern documents. Here the name has an absolutely objective ring to it, a sound novel to the ear and, I must say, most interesting. From time to time I am myself curious to know what it is I am forever doing wrong. What sort of pineapple is this Mandelstam, anyway, who for so and so many years was supposed to have done such and such and, like the scoundrel that he is, keeps dodging it? . . . How much longer is he going to keep on dodging it? That's why the years are wasted on me; others accumulate more respect with every passing day, but for me it's the reverse—time is flowing backwards.

I'm to blame. No two ways about it. I shan't wriggle out of this guilt. I live in insolvency. I save myself by dodging. How much longer am I to go on dodging?

When that tin subpoena arrives or that reminder, Greek in its clarity, from the social organization; when they demand that I name my accomplices, cease my skulduggery, tell where I get the counterfeit money, and sign an undertaking not to travel beyond certain specific limits, I agree on the spot; but immediately, as if nothing had happened, I start dodging again—and so it goes.

In the first place: I ran away from somewhere and I must be sent back, extradited, found and returned. In the second place, I am being mistaken for someone else. No hope of proving identity. Pockets full of trash: cryptic jottings from a year ago, telephone numbers of dead relatives and addresses of persons unknown. In the third place, I signed with Beelzebub or with the State Publishing House a grandiose, unfulfillable contract on Whatman paper smeared with mustard and emery powder pepper in which I undertook to return twice over everything that I ac-

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quired, to belch back fourfold what I misappropriated and to perform sixteen times running that impossible, unimaginable, that unique thing that might, in part, acquit me.

With every passing year I am more incorrigible. As though by a conductor's steel punch I am riddled with holes and stamped with my own surname. Every time someone calls me by my first name I tremble, I simply cannot get used to it, such an honor! For once in one's life to be called Ivan Moyseich by somebody! Hey, Ivan, go scratch the dogs! Mandelstam, go scratch the dogs! To some Frenchy, it's *cher maître,* dear teacher; but me? Mandelstam, go scratch the dogs! To each his own.

An ageing man, I scratch the master's dogs with the bitten stump of my heart, and it's not enough for them, it's not enough. The eyes of Russian writers look at me with canine tenderness and implore me: drop dead! Where does this cringing spite, this grovelling contempt for my name come from? The gypsy at least had his horse, but I am horse and gypsy in one person . . .

Tin subpoenas under the little pillow . . . the forty-sixth contract in place of the wreath of burial ribbon on my forehead, and a hundred thousand lighted cigarettes instead of little candles. . . .

16

No matter how much I work, if I carry horses on my back, if I turn millstones, still I shall never become a worker. My work, whatever form it may take, is seen as mischief, as lawlessness, as an accident. But that's how I like it, so I agree. I subscribe to it with both hands.

It is a question of how you look at it. What I prize in the doughnut is the hole. But what about the dough of the doughnut? You can gobble up the doughnut, but the hole will still be there.

Real work is Brussels lace, the main thing in it is what holds the pattern up: air, punctures, truancy.

But in my case, brethren, work's of no benefit; it doesn't go on my record.

We have a bible of work, but we don't appreciate it. It's Zoshchenko's stories. The only man who ever showed us a worker has been trampled in the dirt. But I demand monuments to Zosh-

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chenko in every city and town of the Soviet Union, or at least, as for Papa Krylov, in the Summer Garden.

That's a man whose work breathes truancy, in whose work Brussels lace lives!

At night on the Ilyinka when the department stores and the trusts are asleep and talking in their native Chinese, at night jokes run along the Ilyinka. Lenin and Trotsky walk about with their arms around each other as though nothing had happened. One has a little pail and a fishing rod from Constantinople in his hand. Two Jews walk about, an inseparable pair—one inquirer and one responder, and the one keeps asking, but the other keeps evading and evading, and there's no way for them to part.

A German organ-grinder walks by with his Schubertian barrel-organ, such a failure, such a sponger . . . *Ich bin arm.* I am poor.

Sleep, my darling . . . M . . . S . . . P . . . O.[13]

The Viy[14] is reading the telephone directory on Red Square. Lift up my eyelids . . . Connect me with the Central Committee. . . .

Armenians from Erevan walk by with green-painted herrings. *Ich bin arm*—I am poor.

And in Armavir on the city coat of arms it is written: the dog barks, the wind carries.

[*Translated by Clarence Brown*]

[13] Initials of the Moscow Union of Consumers' Cooperatives.

[14] The monster in Nikolai Gogol's story of the same name. Its eyelids reached to the ground.

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN

An Album

1

Drowning. THE FIRST DROWNING when I was four. A swimming hole in the country, where we were boarding. A grassy bank with sun. Mothers in clusters. Children in yelling files, leaping and waving into the water. I remember hearing that there was a whirlpool at one edge of the hole and being told not to go near. I don't remember going near, but suddenly I was in it.

Above me a twisting funnel of water, with light at the far large end. My lungs weeping and choking. Up once and a smash of sound, then down again into the funnel and up again with my mouth open. The water flowed through me. I felt I was joining the water, I wouldn't drown, I would flow away, and I was more fascinated than scared. How would it happen? Then my hair was pulled upward.

I remember the body of the young man who pulled me out, lean and brown, but not his face. My mother enfolding me. My quick recovery. Later that afternoon I was running around. But on the other side of the green bank and my mother's arms and the brown strong swimmer is the funnel above me, with the light at the end and the sense of being a spectator while I died. It recurs—fateful but not frightening—in my dreams and in my daydreams, in my life.

2

Farms. It was the word of wonder. Others, in the backs of their brains, have sea and sand, blue and white. For me, it is green and brown and hay-gold sloping up steep hills, the smell of hay and of flanks, cows and horses. Perhaps it was because of the swimming hole that I never wanted the sea. We went to farms, and farmers didn't swim, they had no time. Besides, these farms were in mountains, where there were only brooks.

But it was not flight in my mind, it was desire. The city was bare and dirty and very small in its life, no matter how big. City

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men could do nothing. The country was everything else. Farms were what the country was for. Farmers could do everything.

The other boarders at these farms, and their children, they were the city, too. I avoided them. I stayed with the farmers. I trailed them. They teased, but they were amused, and they taught me when I tried their jobs. I learned, and they were pleased. I ate with them in the kitchen instead of the boarders' dining room, and I learned to eat like them, my left arm around the plate and my right arm shoveling. I worked with them as much as they would allow. By the time I was six, I could milk, I knew all about harness even if I couldn't lift it all, I could drive a team if there was no trouble, I could almost drive a hay-rake, I could tromp down the hay on a wagon or in a mow. By the time I was eight, a farmer asked my mother whether I could come work for him the summer I was nine. He wouldn't pay, but she could come and visit for two weeks board free. She knew them and knew I would eat well and sleep quilted.

It happened every summer then, for six years until I went to college, that I was not a boarder. For two months and a bit, I was part of the country. One day a car stopped on our dirt road, and the city man driving saw me in overalls and high shoes laced over the ankles and said, "Hey, son, how do I get to Kimball's place?" I told him in flawless country accent. I was happy.

When I was twelve, I went to another farm nearby, a big one for those parts, with two teams. Walt ran the place for the woman who owned it. He was burly and sandy and had a cast in his eye, and he teased me and bossed me. He gave me one of the teams for the summer, to be my charge and to work with. They were black mares, not young but strong: Queenie and Bess. Bess was blind with cataracts but could work perfectly with the other mare. I cleaned them and their stalls and harnessed and worked them and cooled them and watered and fed them. When I made a mistake, Walt said, "Call yourself a teamster?" Teamster! I never wanted to leave.

One day I was harnessing Queenie when she was in heat. I had been told that they were skittish then, but when I reached under her for the belly-band, I rubbed her sensitive skin. Like fire, she kicked upward with a hind leg. She kicked my hand into her belly. If it had been into anything hard, the hand would have been broken. I remember my hand being kicked into that softness, I

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remember the sting but also the warmth. I felt strong and familiar and said, "*So* now, you bitch. Here! *So* there, damn you," and felt my hand ache and kept on working.

3

Johnny Mac the Scotchman was the farmer I left to go to Walt's. One night Walt's barn-floor had collapsed, and Johnny had gone over, along with other neighbors, to help out. He had taken me along. Walt saw me work, pitching out hay by lamplight, and asked whether I'd like to come over there next summer. Walt's place was larger, and I would have my own team. Besides, Johnny and his wife fought a lot. So I went. Johnny and I were still friendly when we met, but there was a proud tone in him as if he forgave me for wanting to better myself.

One morning in the middle of my first summer at Walt's there was a phone call for Nellie, who owned the place. Afterward, she called Walt over, and I could see them murmuring together. Then Walt told me, as if it were a favor, the way he always told me adult news, that Johnny Mac had been found dead in his milk-house. He was epileptic, which I had never known, had fallen into the milk-vat in the middle of a fit, and had drowned.

For three summers I had always been with Johnny at milking-time. It had nothing to do with me, this death, it could have happened spring or fall or winter, even if I had never left him, I wouldn't have been around then anyway; but secretly I took it as my fault. If I hadn't left him, he would still be alive! I knew even then it was flimsy, I was pretending, but it was my first chance to have a quiet sorrow, a guilt that was worth not talking about.

4

Fetching the cows was boy's work. That was one reason they hired me. These were dairy farms, and during the busy haying season, a man wouldn't have to leave the fields early to go for the cows at milking time. But I also fetched them for the morning milking. I asked to do that. Walt thought I was silly and said, "Sure."

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I was up at four-thirty and climbed the hill of the night pasture at quarter to five. It was still quite dark and, rain or no rain, very wet. I would cross the stone wall and trudge up the slope listening to the sound of my boots in the wet grass, listening for the tinkle of the one belled cow above me.

The light would be coming by the time I got up there. As I approached, I could hear the cows grazing. Only a few would be sleeping or even lying down. They would turn their heads and look at me easily, as if they understood that only someone who really had something to do with them would be up on the mountain with them at that hour.

I called to them. "Co', boss. Co', bossy." I moved around the outside and started them down. I counted in the coming light. Thirty-one. As we descended, they moved ahead of me in clumping grace, making me feel great and attended. When one stopped and arched her back, I knew it was to piss. They could shit while they walked. I liked them to do both.

Now as we came lower, the sun appeared behind the mountains to the east. The ridges were glistening while the valley was still black. The windows would light up in the house below, Nellie and her mother in the kitchen to finish all the day's baking before breakfast. The lone bell tinkled. The hooves plodded stately in the damp. The mist below shredded and rose into the sun. The smell was of everything beginning.

Afternoons were different, especially on sticky August days. One hot afternoon when I got to the top of the day pasture, I couldn't make the cows move. I called, I threw stones, the ones I chased would budge a little, and as soon as I went after the others, the first ones would stop. The heat made them mean, and the flies tormented them. A couple of them raised their tails like banners and ran through the woods to chase the flies off. Others sloughed into the swamp where it was hard for me to chase them and head them. I couldn't believe that these were the same creatures with whom I had come down through the dawn that very day.

Nothing worked. They balked and stood. After a while my throat got tight, and I retreated from my new maturity to rely on the boyhood to which I still had some claim. I broke and ran all the way down to the barn, almost in tears, to where Walt was driving a team on the hay fork. I told him I simply couldn't move

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the cows, they wouldn't heed. I expected him to recognize the remnants of boy in me, tease a little, and take over.

His mouth thinned out. "You get your ass back up that hill," he said confidentially, "or I'll boot it off this place." I was shocked. I had not resorted to boyhood for some time, but I had thought it would still work. I don't think I ever used it again.

I went all the way up the hill again, the best part of a mile. This time I got the cows started. I knew there was no choice. It wasn't fear of Walt himself or any lesson in grit. I didn't want to be fired. I didn't want to lose the cows, their other selves, the morning creatures they had been and would be again. Their afternoon selves didn't matter. I could endure them, in between the mornings.

5

A circus had pitched its tents on Tyler's Flats, alongside the state road just the other side of Hubbell Corners. I walked down after supper one night. I met some boys I knew, and we looked at the sideshows before the circus began.

As we moved to the ticket booth, a fat man with a broad-brimmed hat and a hoarse broken voice asked us whether we would like to get in free. All we had to do was wait after the show was over and help load the benches on the trucks. I had money in my pocket, but I wanted to do it, to have the story to tell when I got back to the city in the fall. I said yes, and so did the others. The fat man asked for our belts as security so that we wouldn't scoot after the show.

The circus was tatty but cozy. Afterward, the man gave us back our belts and we loaded benches on to a couple of trucks. It took only about half an hour, but before we finished, everyone who might have given me a lift back up to the farm had left.

I walked home alone. It was completely dark. I have never been, outdoors, in such complete dark. No stars, no hint of difference even to make trees seem blacker than the sky. It was about a mile and a half up the dirt road to the farm, and I walked uphill through this black lake. I knew the road well. I had walked it many times in summer and snow, had driven horses over it often. I could tell where I was by the cant of the road, almost by the ruts.

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When I came to a turn or a rise, I could see it in my mind, and I knew how far before the next turn. But I saw absolutely nothing.

I felt comfortable and fine. To know some part of the earth so well that it belonged to me in the dark. I felt easy and free. I walked up the mountain alone and felt that everything around me was mine.

The only other time I had that feeling was almost thirty years later in Rome. One Sunday morning in December I had to get up early to take a train. At six o'clock I left the small hotel, walked over to the Via Condotti and up to the Piazza di Spagna to find a taxi. I was absolutely alone. Not another person, not a car, not a dog. Nothing. It was clear, gold morning, and the ancient city belonged to me.

The light was like joy, but it reminded me of that complete dark. Both times, sunlight and black, I seemed to hear for miles and miles, and heard silence. Everything was mine.

6

Orrie Nichols, the hired man, had only three fingers on his left hand. A childhood mishap with a mowing machine. He was about forty, had pop-eyes of blue, something close to a cleft palate, and he worked hard. His maimed hand made no difference. When he set about something, like cocking up the windrows in a field that had just been raked, he worked more intensely than anyone could have paid him for. At thirteen, working alongside him, I could see the difference in our universes. His was complete, and he occupied it completely.

Saturday nights he dressed to go out, with his mail-order suit, clip-on bow, turned-up brim, and long curved pipe with a tiny bowl. He looked as if some college boy had dressed him as a mock college boy. Often he would come home drunk, late at night, breathe heavily and bump a little as he climbed the stairs and went past my door. The rest of the time he just worked. We worked and ate together. He was not withdrawn or morose, he laughed a lot with a whinny, still we never talked much, except about work.

One Sunday there was an airplane down at Tyler's Flats, where

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the circus had played. The *Roxbury Times* had announced that it was coming, that you could go up for ten minutes for five dollars. Orrie, who never went anywhere except to fairs and to places where he could get home-brew, had torn out the announcement. That Sunday he said he was walking down to the Flats, and he invited me to go with him. He was wearing his college clothes. I put on some clean clothes, and we went.

We stood at the side of Tyler's Flats with a crowd of others and watched the little monoplane take off and land in ten-minute flights. Two passengers at a time. Orrie had got excited when he first saw the plane, and the longer we watched, the higher-pitched his voice became, the more he laughed his whinny. After about an hour or so, he said to me, "B'God, let's give her a try. I'll treat you, b'God." Ten dollars was a lot of money to Orrie.

I was grateful and impressed by the offer. Like him, I had never been in a plane before. I was a little scared. I knew my parents would be upset if they found out, even if nothing happened. But I had no choice, and I was glad of it.

Orrie paid the pilot for both of us, and we climbed in behind him. The plane bumped across the field. Orrie whinnied softly a few times as we started, but after we took off, he was quiet. I gripped the edges of the seat and was surprised to find that I wasn't frightened or sick. I was more surprised to find that I couldn't recognize anything below. The pilot had headed north, we must have flown over our farm, but I wasn't sure I recognized the house.

I looked at Orrie. His face was serious as he looked out, as if he were listening. His mouth gaped a little, but his brows were knotted as when he was untangling harness. His three-fingered hand gripped the window ledge tightly.

We bumped down and rolled across the field. Orrie whinnied again. When the motor stopped, the pilot tore two coupons from a book for us. They certified that we had been up in an airplane, and they bore the facsimile signature of Casey Jones, a famous pilot of the time, who ran a company that had a fleet of barnstorming planes.

I thanked Orrie, and we walked home. It was hard to believe that this was the same ground that had just looked so different.

Nellie said, "My land," when we told her. Walt made some teasing remark, plainly jealous.

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Orrie still didn't talk much to me from then on. The plane ride hadn't made any special bond between us. There was no change at all in him that I could see. The change was in me, about him. On Saturday nights, when he bumped drunk along the hall, I thought of his face in the plane, listening, the three-fingered hand clutching the view.

7

I had the blood lust of a boy. On Christmas vacation, when I was up visiting the farm, I asked to be the one to stick the knife in the hog's throat when they were butchering it. They agreed because they needed me. There were two men on the farm, Walt and Orrie, and two neighbors. It took four men to catch the hog, to turn it on its back and hold it there, each man hanging on to a leg. Then I took a knife, slimmed to a stiletto by years of sharpening, and as Walt directed, I felt along the under-throat for the hard spot, then for the soft spot just below it. I slit the skin gently. Then, with my left hand, I poised the knife in the slit and rammed it in with my right palm. I turned it, sunk to the hilt, round and round. I loved it. Then I pulled it out and we all ran for the fence. The hog got up quickly, furious, charged about the pig-pen leaking sloshes of blood all over the mud, grew tipsy, then wildly drunk, then fell on its side, twitched, shit, and died. The men hung it up in the barn by the hind legs to dress it, and I helped scoop out the yards and yards of slippery red and yellow tubing.

So the following summer when Walt's old dog had to be killed, I volunteered. Trixie was old, smelly, and useless, but what settled it was that she could no longer eat. Her teeth were almost gone, her gums were sore, she just moped and stank and could hardly walk. Walt said he couldn't do it himself. He had raised her from a pup, she had licked milk from his fingers. When he had been out late, she had waited for him by the road in any weather. Tears welled in his crossed eyes. He couldn't do it, but it had to be done. I said that if he wanted, I would do it for him.

He gave me an old can of chloroform that was left over from some earlier dispatch, and I took it, a rag, and Trixie into the cow-barn. I slid the big door shut. She and I were alone. She was too tired to be suspicious, and she sat still when I approached. I

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doused the rag as Walt had instructed and held it over her patient muzzle for minutes. Nothing happened. She blinked at me. I took the rag away. She whimpered and licked my hand. I doused the rag again and smothered her again for minutes. Again she just blinked and lay there, stinking and breathing. I went out and reported to Walt, who was sitting under a tree, pale. He sniffed the can and said he guessed the stuff had got weak. He was gentle with me, which wasn't usual when I bumbled a job. He went into the cow-barn and brought Trixie out and patted her. Then he and I went off to some other chore.

A few nights later after supper, I suddenly noticed that Walt was not sitting around with us in the kitchen. Trixie was gone. Just about the time I noticed this, I heard a shot. I looked at the others in the room. They were not surprised. I knew at once that I was not supposed to say anything about it or go outside. Some time later, in the gloom, I saw Walt coming back across the lower pasture toward the barn carrying his shotgun and a spade. He looked immense in the faint light.

Ten or twelve years later, one of the neighbors stopped by to see me on a trip to New York for a ball game. We took out some past experiences, like photographs, and looked at them together. Then I asked about Walt. He told me that one night a few years before, Walt had gone down below the barn with his shotgun and blown his head off. He had some incurable disease.

I suddenly saw him crossing the pasture, this time smaller.

8

Joe Moore was a tall and grave and catarrhal farmer, with a voice that sounded of the pipe that was usually in his mouth. He hawked and spit, and puffed at his little pipe, and seemed to me a very complete organism, with work-clothes molded to his body. I heard rumors of his money troubles and a bad check, which made him more mature and mysterious to me. They also said he was having trouble with his daughter Sarah, who was three years older than I and wouldn't even look at me. She was said to be wild. I had seen chuckling at the filling station that came to a quick stop when Joe approached.

One day when Walt and I were in the general store, Joe came

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in. He and Walt exchanged greetings, and Joe bobbed his pipe at me. They talked of calves and milk prices and weather, then Joe said he was going up the mountain past our place the next day to do some berrying. I heard myself say, "Can I go with you?" I loved to pick blackberries, but I was surprised at my nerve.

Joe looked at me more serious than surprised.

I said, "Walt, you said the swale would take another day to dry out. Tomorrow'd be a good day to go." Walt admitted it reluctantly, as if he didn't want to force Joe.

Joe said, "This is real berrying, boy. Not like when the women do it. I mean to pick. Think you can keep up the whole day?"

I knew I could, and I said so.

At supper that night Walt made fun of me to the others, teasing me about getting tired with Joe and crying for my mother. Then he and the others exchanged some soft comments, that Joe might better be doing other things than pick berries, considering the state of his affairs and his family.

Next morning after breakfast, Joe arrived in his pickup truck. He had two milk-pails, a butter-pail, and his lunch. I had one milk-pail, a butter-pail, and my lunch. He bobbed his pipe once at me, waved at Walt in the barn doorway, and we drove up to the end of the road, to the abandoned farm. We didn't speak much. I thought that starting a conversation would seem boyish, and he had nothing to say. We left the truck and walked up the broad steep slope of the mountain meadow, all clover and mint and thyme, to the blanket of woods at the top. I knew there were berries, I had been there before.

In the woods we came to the glades where the bushes were thick. The light came down through the trees as through high windows. The place was still and scented with heartbreak.

We set down our milk-pails and our lunches, we hung the butter-pails from our belts. Then we began. The bushes were heavy with berries in middle August. There had been rain two days ago, which was why I had the day off, and then the sun had ripened them all. They gleamed and smelled. I rolled down my sleeves against the briers and went in. I liked the briers. I even liked being stuck with them once in a while, but I liked conquering them, taking a branch carefully and twisting it aside around another branch, then moving forward like a burglar amid alarms.

I knew not to budge until I had picked every berry in sight,

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lest I knock off some ripe ones. I knew to bend and look upward before I moved because there were always some hidden under leaves. I knew never to eat one while picking.

I dropped the berries into the pail at my waist, and the pink-pank on the tin bottom ceased as it was covered, and the perfume came up. When the pail was almost full, I went out and emptied it into the milk-pail. The first time I went out, Joe had already emptied some into his milk-pail. I could see his cap, off there in the bushes.

Around noon when I came back for the third or fourth time to empty my pail, Joe was sitting under a tree. His first milk-pail was almost full, mine about two-thirds. He nodded and said, "Good worker. 'Bout time for dinner, hain't it?"

I got my lunch and sat against a tree near him, feeling stronger than when we had started. He put his pipe on a stone and opened his paper bag. He asked me a question, about where I lived in the city. The fact that he asked me anything was startling. I answered, and we talked. He asked how many summers I'd been working on farms. We talked about his summers when he was my age. We talked about baseball. His face seemed to lighten. We talked about the Roxbury team. He hadn't had the chance to see a game this year, but he knew most of the players.

After lunch he said, "Say, I b'lieve I know." He led me through the woods to a big mossy rock. Under it a spring bubbled. "Jes' what we need," he said. He threw himself prone, took off his cap, and drank. Then he brushed the surface of the water for me, and I lay down and drank.

That afternoon he stayed near me as we picked, so we could keep on talking. He told me about where he had grown up and gone to school, over the mountain in the next county, about some of his fights in the schoolyard and behind the woodshed.

By mid-afternoon, when we came out to empty our butter-pails at the same time, my milk-pail was full and he was well into his second. "Hell, that's enough," he said. "Let's quit early and not tell nobody. Anyway, I got an idee."

We stowed our berries down in the truck. Then he led me through the sun, past the abandoned farmhouse, to a small brook. In one place there was a pool just big enough to lie down in and get covered, with smooth washed stones on the bottom. "We might's well," he said. He tried to keep his face grave, but he

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grinned a little. We took off our clothes, and I saw again how white a farmer's body is compared to his face and neck and hands and forearms. We took turns lying in the icy pool, shivering and laughing. Then we came out and lay on the grass in the sun, drying and talking.

By and by he got up, naked, took a jack-knife from his pants pocket and walked over to some bushes. He cut a branch. "Here's somethin' I bet you never see," he said. I asked him what it was. "Whistle wood."

He trimmed off a length about eight inches. It was hollow. Then he cut a notch in it near one end, like the notch in a whistle. Then he blew in the end, and it whistled.

He lay down again next to me and tootled on it. I laughed and said it was great.

"Yep," he said, "I knew them as could put holes along of the top and play regular tunes on it." He handed it to me. "You want it?"

I thanked him. I tried a few notes myself, and we laughed. Soon we heard a cowbell tinkling far across the valley. Some farmer was driving his cows in for milking.

Joe reached for his pants and pulled out the watch that hung from his belt by a leather thong. His face changed.

"Time to go," he said.

9

All through the New York winter I got the summer every week. The *Roxbury Times* was a poor sheet, stuffed with syndicated fillers and badly printed, but it came weekly into the stone city from the green heaven, and the news notes were full of the names that were godlike to me, the ads were of stores that I thought wonderfully old. One week there was a news note that Carol Becker had pneumonia and had been taken to the Oneonta hospital.

She and I had kissed the summer before. She was a chunky girl of fifteen, a year older than I, who swam often in the pool I had helped to make by damming a creek with logs and stones. While she and the others dove and swam, I dabbled and floated on a raft. After the whirlpool, I had never learned to swim.

Carol was friendly but meaty and attracted me less than the

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other girls, some of whom were less friendly. I never thought of asking her for a date.

One night after supper, Duncan, the sixteen-year-old son of a nearby farmer, asked me to go for a ride. He wasn't going any place in particular, just his young nuts driving him crazy. I glowed at the invitation, and we wound down the hill in his father's new Chevrolet. When we got to the state road, he turned left, and soon we saw two girls sitting on the bridge railing. One was Carol, the other was prettier.

Dunc stopped and asked them to go for a ride with us. They giggled and teased for a few moments, but they knew we knew that they were sitting there in the hope that some boys would come along. Soon they giggled and shrugged and got in. Dunc drove up to the creamery and parked in the shed behind. He got in the back of the car with the other girl. Carol moved into the front with me, mostly because she wasn't wanted in the back. We kissed as if it were our duty but not too bad. A bout of kissing, then a rest, then another bout, while Duncan and his girl were rustling in the dark back seat for a couple of hours.

After I was back in New York that fall, I got a letter from Carol. It began "Dear Swiming Pal" and went on to tell me things that she and our friends had been doing since I left. She had very little charm even in her letter, but I liked the earnest way she had written the misspelled word.

When I read about her pneumonia the following winter, I remembered her little mouth pressing mine tightly and yet rather cool. The next week I read in the Roxbury paper that she had died. She was the first person I knew, of my own age or near it, to die.

I was awestruck. A girl I had actually kissed had achieved that mysterious state. It made me feel linked with large mysteries. Lips that I had kissed were now in a coffin, in a grave. It made me feel experienced and important.

But also it seemed odd that this girl, so nice but so unexceptional, had been chosen for this honor. A girl who didn't even know how to spell "swimming" already knew the answers to the biggest questions. There was something silly about it.

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JAMES WRIGHT

Humming a Tune for an Old Lady in West Virginia

dummy-dummy-dummy-dummy day:
gran'ma's pretty baby. . . .

More than other song,
Your song, all yours.
You cast line in the water
A long time ago.
You plumbed it down, down,
Down to the fish-heads,
Stones, closed windows,
The sludge black snow.

More than other song,
Yours wakes the cat fish.
No other, not even
The splintering of ice.
Not even squeal and grind
Of chain on cold chisel
On a rust-rotten girder,
The terminal bridge.

More than other song,
Yours. I sit and listen
To the soft floppy whisper
A drowned boy made.
He rose in two pieces
A mile down river,
One cord round his pecker
And one shoulder blade.

Now you're lost over water.
All the gouging and dragging,
Searching, finding,
Now, a mile down,
And into the other river,

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I hear you still singing.
I don't die, I'm not deaf.
I scare, I go on.

Dummy-dummy comes round
Like the old blind mailman
Delivering bills that
Nobody can pay.
Black widow's the madam
Stone broke in the cat house,
And the girl with the best song
Can't sell it today,
So she gives it away.

To a Dead Drunk

How carefully, fastidiously,
You lounged beside the hollow lute.
The cold aristocrats that die
Left you alone in your defeat.
Nibbling in loneliness you ground
Bitter between your outraged teeth
Early Eliot and late Pound,
Before you drank yourself to death.

Oh, plenty will remember them.
Maybe the Cyclades will not,
Nor the frail Irishmen who scream
Into our century and rot.
But someone whose triumphant name
Is Lyndon Fink Jane Adam Smith
Will pounce on your forgotten name
To write a dissertation with.

God help me too, defeated poet.
You walked with me one afternoon
Of blind stone and Ohio soot,
To visit a great lonely man.
Never you mind. Today I bought

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Collected poems of Ralph Hodgson.
Now you are dead. I am not yet.
Hodgson is now. I will be soon.

Still, in Minerva, he had still
A white tree, a white miracle
Beyond a little mound of coal
(Listen, what rhymes with miracle?)
We sang all afternoon, we tossed
A willing honey under the tongue.
I must have seemed a silly ghost.
Pity me now. I was just young.

Moon

I am so delighted
With you, because I know you
And I know you
Came down to me, answering.
I walked up hill
After you went all the way down.
I hadn't seen you,
But I believed in you,
And I believed you were dividing three cones
Of sky down beyond
The left shoulder of the white oak
In Warnock,
Ohio, and I remember and I pray
Come down to me love and bring me
One panther of silver and one happy
Evening of snow,
And I will give you
My life, my own, and now
My beloved has come to me and we have gone
walking
Below you beside the East
River in the snow, all
Three of us, leaving

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Six prints of panther, kind
Woman, and happy
Man,
And I love you,
Sky full of laurels and arrows,
White shadow of cities where the scars
Of forgotten swans
Waken into feathers
And new leaves.

A Poem about Breasts

Already she seems bone thin
When her clothes are on.
The lightest wind blows
Her dress toward doorways.
Everybody thinks he can see
Her body longing to follow
Helpless and miserable,
Dreaming itself
Into an apparition of loneliness,
A spirit of vine wondering
At a grape here and there,
As the September spider,
The master, ascends
Her long spine.

Already she weighs more, yet
She still bows down slightly,
As I stand in her doorway.
It's not hunching, it's only
That children have been reaching
Upward for years to gather
Sweetness of her face.
They are innocent and passionate
Thieves of the secret hillsides.
Now she rises, tall, round, round,
And round again, and, again, round.

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JOHN PECK

The Upper Trace

—for Y.W.

He was old but he paced
The both of us.
We followed the moraines
And cañons and the stranded rocks
A half day's climb, and then came on the ice,
A solid river bending from the col
Into its pool.
The high crevasse,
Cutting across the neck,
Held hollows. He went down
Past blue veins toward blue ice,
I following. The light was breathing,
Sleepily, as it does upon the sides
Of boats in rippled water.
Its wavering flush,
Unaltered at the fortieth layer
Of deeping color,
Unearthly on our flesh,
Was like the sound
Below, a beating hush
Of water out of sight
Fissuring toward ground.

And he said, this is where the névé
Grips at rock and chokes with melt,
Falling away.
Slow cold
Had numbed our hands and forearms—
We angled back to the rim
Into shadow. It had come
Quickly, a wide half-cone
Fanning over us from the crest,
And it was this that let the white slope stay.
I asked

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What is it throws the light back
In steady points from the valley?
He said, that is the sheer face
Of granite sliced and smoothed by this,
The tributary ice.
A horse strange to this country
Will smell the polished stone
And test it with his hoof,
Thinking it water.

We made camp, my hands stung
Back into feeling over fire,
Remembering sundered heft
Of things they made once.
Ruddy, the fingertips of pines,
Brushing the silence, were so steep.
His set face in the flickering
Wash of embers
Was yet the same
That I had seen,
But was as far
As it had ever been.
Dumb blood, how long warmed,
Reached now from my hands
Into my own face in a flood,
Barbed with sleep.

Spring Journey

I saw from the mountain highway
The trees below glide through themselves,
And saw, where snow had sunk away,
Pool after pool in scattered shelves
Catching the image of the sun,
Rolling it deep inside the hill;

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And thought of this place, soon again
Alive with hunters, and the kill;
And of Golaud, tracking fresh blood
Until he knew his way no more,
Coming on water in the wood,
And Melisande weeping there,
And deep within that water, gold:
The crown that Bluebeard gave to her
Thrown to the bottom, blurred and cold.
And she refused to touch that crown,
And would not let him touch her flesh,
And urged that she must stay, alone;
Until Golaud, watching the mesh
Of gold weave deep within the pool,
Persuaded her that she must go
With him, before the dark could fall,
With him, which way he did not know.

NORMAN PORTER

This One and That One

That one is packed with thought,
thought on thought

but this one knows
as the girl knows
is known as fate

that one is filled with desires

this one has no desires
but only aspires
to what is hers

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that one is in continual fear

this one four square
knows no fear

that one makes aims, is projective, objective

this one forever inactive
still as the stone
leaves nothing undone

& ever presides over, and
knows the eternal now.

O Sister

I have to examine your grave
look your skull in its face.

You were lovely and
loved of the world
you left us.

So young
you died.

. . .

Your coffin is a station
on my road, to stop at

I think of your bones, recall
your lowering in the earth

when the ropes slipped
and the box tipped.

Often I weigh—
ponder how you lie

wonder why
you went.

My Sister, will you tell me?

. . .

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Number

The man gave me a beetle
about nine inches long

grey & formal, at first
I thought it was a toy

but I knew just
what it would do

it turned to glowing gold
it lived and looked

at me, emitting
a tune of numbers

this tune, too, I knew well
it was a base of number
I can no longer remember.

This beetle
was life
eternal.

Two

I enter the room
lie on my bed
look at the ceiling

You walk along the shore
sit by the shore grass
and pick sea roses.

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JUDITH HEMSCHEMEYER

In the Mountains

The air was so thin
My mother's potatoes wouldn't boil,
And it only took two drinks
To make us high.

At night we slipped out
And climbed. Moonlight made us bone-white statues,
Our veins dark as pine boughs
Against the mountain's thigh.

Even our quarrel
On the path that coiled around barbaric
Hogbacks was ennobling—
Intense and cadenced

As an ancient play
In which a steaming, severed head is thrust
Suddenly "aloft" and gazes
Blindly at the sky.

Then it rained and we lay
On Japanese pillows of raw two-by-fours
In the black shell of the block's
Last empty tract house,

Breathing new wood
And taking our slow way across those hushed
Minefields of ecstasy:
Faces, eyelids, skin.

Sleepy, our hands
Like stumbling brontosauri grazed continents
Of flesh, then overcome
By sweetness, sank to rest.

So we hardly noticed
When the room, the house rose from the grip

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Of Colorado clay
And hurtled—freighted

Like a flimsy tomb
With all the artifacts we were to crave,
Rugs, silver, bottles of gin—
Brutally toward the day

Eyelids would be just
Dark hides stretched across the doorway
Of an abandoned cave,
Rubble heaped within.

We woke so cold
Our bones belonged to Eskimos, who carved
A dice game from my backbone,
A cup from your hip.

That way, don't you see?
There would always be fire, and faces,
And warm hands to hold us both,
And you to hold me.

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JOHN SIMON

Theatre Chronicle

IN TRYING TO SEE THE NEW YORK THEATRE of this season in perspective, we come all too quickly to the vanishing point. True, even halfway serious observers have been complaining about the death of Broadway, the Broadwayization of off-Broadway, and the unconscionable frivolity of off-off-Broadway for some years now. But the first half of the 1969-70 season truly represents some kind of record in triviality, worthlessness, and sheer paucity of shows. The number of Broadway openings so far this season is far below that of previous half-seasons—so much so, in fact, that even the staid *New York Times* saw fit to run a symposium on whether Broadway is dying. The situation is getting harder and harder to dismiss with the usual crying wolf, for, even in the fable, the wolf finally does turn up; nor is there consolation, necessarily, in the saw about the "fabulous invalid," for even fabulous invalids eventually die.

It has indeed been worse than usual, with not even the customary British imports to ease the situation. To be sure, David Merrick revived John Osborne's five-year-old *A Patriot for Me,* with the London production's star, Maximilian Schell, again playing Alfred Redl, the homosexual Imperial Austrian intelligence officer blackmailed by the Russians into betraying state secrets, and, when found out, forced to shoot himself. What was, apparently, strong stuff in London in 1965—notably the drag-ball scene in which Austrian officers and aristocrats appear in female frippery, and the Empire is seen in full decadence *(sic transvestit gloria mundi)*—proved small and flat beer in New York. The play is untidy, unfocused, unpenetrating and tiresome as it rambles on and on, like a third-class trip on the Transsiberian Railway, and the various homosexual scenes seemed tame stuff after what has been presented here in the last few years. So, in fact, the one thing that *Patriot* did accomplish was to remind us how quickly mores—in society, on stage—can change, and how fast a play that capitalizes on its sexual avant-gardism is left with only an epigonous appeal to the epicene rearguard. It also shows us an Osborne transformed from a strident proletarian rebel into a smug, conservative arriviste, the villains of this play being those members of the upper class who prevent the lower-class but gifted Redl from assuming his rightful position in society.

Somewhat more interesting but scarcely more successful was Arthur Kopit's *Indians.* First produced in London, then in Washington, D. C., and finally on Broadway, the work underwent continual changes, apparently for the worse. This is a play about Buffalo Bill, friend of the Indians and their betrayer, who hobnobbed with many a chief but also

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exterminated the buffalo herds off which the Indian lived; who put on Wild West shows that enabled him, and the rest of America, to purge their bad consciences by sentimentalizing the redskin. The play alternates between scenes at the rodeo and scenes in which a Presidential Commission, under the guise of hearing grievances, further insults and cheats the red men. Interspersed, too, are outrageous episodes involving comic-strip characters like the Ol' Time President, Wild Bill Hickock, Annie Oakley, Jesse James, and the Grand Duke Alexis of Russia on a buffalo-*cum*-Indian-shooting expedition. This material tries to be Absurdist but generally manages to be only sophomoric.

For that is the problem with Arthur Kopit: a bright, amusing, talented young man seemingly frozen forever at the clever Harvard sophomore level at which he produced *Oh Dad, Poor Dad.* This is only partly Kopit's fault. The American theatre is so hungry for new playwrights—or, if you prefer, for success stories—that it will extol and exalt an impressionable young man so quickly and absolutely that he has to be an extraordinarily strong character not to become an *enfant terrible,* a famulus of fame, a playboy of the Western Coast, or some other form of arrested development. *Indians* contains a good, dramatizable concept: our duality toward, and double-dealing with, the Indians —ruthlessness for their living selves, infantile mooning over the idea of them. And the same, of course, applies to our dealing with the Negroes and with Vietnam, though the parallels are less glaring than some slapdash liberals have hastily assumed and praised this play for.

But, alas, Kopit is not very good at bringing his concept to genuine theatrical life. For one thing, he keeps the characters he likes—Buffalo Bill, Sitting Bull, Chief Joseph, etc.—not wholly sympathetic but at least more or less realistic; whereas the ones he dislikes or wants to have fun with become garish caricatures. For another, he and his clever director, Gene Frankel, have gone all out for fancy theatrical effects—abetted by the set design of Oliver Smith (a circus arena that can transform itself in a trice into a number of other things), the lighting of Thomas Skelton (which includes cunning strobe lights during scene changes, so that one image does not exactly flow but teasingly jerks itself into the next one by tiny, jagged reshufflings between flashes of light), the outlandish and exaggerated electronic music of Richard Peaslee (who has never equaled his contribution to *Marat/Sade),* and the impressive but too serious choreography of Julie Arenal (including a terrifying Indian dance of self-immolation) and elaborate sound effects that include Buffalo Bill's subconscious addressing him stereophonically. It is all a visual and aural feast—I haven't enumerated the half of it—with the mind, regrettably, cast in the role of Lazarus.

The most significant feature of the season is its desperate reaching for revivals. The first of these, a carry-over from last season, was *The Front Page,* which began as a semistar-studded revival at a small New Jersey playhouse, was beefed up and transferred to Broadway, where it

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proceeded to prosper despite its general sleaziness and mainly undistinguished staging and acting. This 1928 play by Hecht and MacArthur is full of the least attractive ideas of its time: American chauvinism, contempt for culture, condescension to the intellect, sentimental affection for crooks in and out of government. And, vilest of all, the notion that newspapermen are the toughest, shrewdest, meanest and ultimately cleverest guys in the world. The hell of it is that these smartalecky or simply asinine attitudes are still cozily alive among the public, which lapped up this brash, tawdry and essentially unfunny farce.

Yet there is, at least, a low-level knowhow with which *The Front Page* is put together, a reasonable manipulative proficiency. What can be said for a revival of *Three Men on a Horse,* a play that must have drawn precious few laughs from intelligent customers even in 1935, when this John Cecil Holm-George Abbott farce first became a hit? Abbott, at 82, was again directing, only this time in slow motion; Sam Levene was repeating his original role of Patsy, a performance he has since made famous in every play he has been in; all ages were upped considerably—the young lead, Erwin, played by Jack Gilford as a spry fifty, while his ornery, tightfisted boss was played by Paul Ford as a last-ditch stand in the war against senility, flubbed lines dropping all over like falling hair or teeth. It was, in short, less a revival than an embalming; an evening not of dramatics but of geriatrics. But this mirthless shuffling about so delighted our senile or prematurely senescent drama reviewers—and especially that most senior of juniors, Richard Watts, Jr.—as to garner a set of excellent notices and achieve an estimable run. Yet the play is pitiful in its want of wit, and merely confirms the unhappy suspicion that, however bad most present theatre, that of the good old days may have been even worse. Only it did not then have to compete with television and vastly improved cinema.

Revivals kept coming at us. Over at Lincoln Center, where an all-American season is in progress, they began with Saroyan's *The Time of Your Life,* the hit of 1940. This is a curious play, dripping with sentimentality on the surface, and full of bitterness underneath. But it is a comic, absurd, lovable bitterness—with only one character among the many truly evil, and he dispatched in the most jovially improbable way at the end—a bitterness which, when it is not an outright joke, merely serves to remind us how beautiful life is nevertheless. I am not suggesting that this is an impossible stance; yet there is something uncomfortable about looking at life as at a pitiful nag, Rosinante, and forcing Quixote-colored spectacles over one's knacker's eyes. In fact, it is hard to say what is real here, the sentimentality or the disenchantment: whether the play is a cynic's mendacious daydream, or a sloppy sentimentalist's determination to overlook repeated kicks in the groin. Either way, it is an uneasy, double vision, and neither its mooning nor its moaning rings true.

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This dramatic oxymoron was performed by a spotty cast under the less than idiomatic direction of John Hirsch, the Hungarian-born Canadian director. But Douglas W. Schmidt's saloon setting was intoxicatingly atmospheric, down to its last lovably untidy, rickety detail, and only the marble game seemed less versatile than the author specifies. Characteristically, a lot of patronizing references to Wesley, the Negro piano player, were cravenly omitted, because though one wanted nostalgic period-authenticity, one did not wish to run afoul of anyone. Granted the casting was unfortunate, especially on the distaff side—the beefily unpathetic Kitty of Susan Tyrell, the blandly trivial Mary L. of Priscilla Pointer, the freshman-debating-society Elsie of Laura Esterman—the tinseled look and tinny sound were nonetheless the play's own, and demonstrated how the jewels of American playwriting are designed for instant tarnish.

It is high time that someone publish a judicious reëvaluation of the drama of the thirties, or, for that matter, of the entire literature of that period. In the theatre, at any rate, nothing of indisputable merit will emerge. The attitudinizing melodramas of Sherwood and Kingsley will fare as poorly as the folkloristic revels and urban pastorals of Marc Connelly and Clifford Odets, or the vastly overrated farces of Kaufman and his various collaborators. Nor is there much potential for survival in the touching efforts at sophistication of S. N. Behrman, the historical pastiches of Maxwell Anderson, or the coy psychologizings of Philip Barry. The earnest strivings of Sidney Howard will prove as artless as the artsiness of Saroyan, or as the thirties' works of the man who was to emerge as America's one great dramatist with his earlier and, particularly, his later works—Eugene O'Neill. The thirties could be excised from the history of American drama—assuming that it has a history—and no one, except the overpraised authors, the worse for it.

Still another revival, also originating in the suburbs, Long Island this time, was another semistellar production of Thornton Wilder's perennial favorite, *Our Town*. Now it is a well-known fact that perennial favorites take a terrible beating, but it is a moot point whether they get it undeservedly or are, in fact, asking for it. If you write a play that is just perfect for high-school dramatic clubs, chances are that it will be performed to death, both quantitatively and qualitatively, by highschool dramatic clubs. But further chances are that, if it appealed quite so much to the little darlings and their teachers, there must have been something infantile about it in the first place, and so about *Our Town* there is. It is another thirties' product (1938) and may be viewed as a conservative answer to the general leftism of the contemporary theatre. The play is, as Wilder said in his introduction, "an attempt to find a value above all price for the smallest events in our daily life." It is precisely of such inflation that sentimentalism is made, and when one of the dead people in the play's last act opines, "My, wasn't life awful and wonderful," we get the philosophy and malady of both *Our Town*

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and *The Time of Your Life* in a nutshell. In *Our Town,* where the dead can hardly wait to forget all about it, life is wonderful but awful; in *The Time of Your Life* it is, despite all the social ills and private meanness and suffering, somehow as marvelous as the people in it, awful but wonderful.

There is, perhaps, nothing inherently wrong with this view, whichever end is up, as long as you do not use it as a formula for oversimplification and falsification, or just simple fudging. "Oh, earth, you're too wonderful for anybody to realize you," Wilder's freshly-deceased Emily apostrophizes. Next, she asks the Stage Manager through her tears: "Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it?—every, every minute?" To which the Stage Manager, who is more than a Greek chorus, and rather like God or Thornton Wilder, responds, "No. [Pause] The saints and poets, maybe—they do some." Well, then why this apotheosis of Grover's Corners, N. H., circa 1900, if people there do not fully realize life? Why not focus on Paris or Rome or Florence, where the incidence of poets, and probably even saints, is greater? And how can the "value above all price for the smallest events" be found in a context of simpering or platitudinizing nonentities who clearly do not realize—in either sense—the worth of living?

And while *Our Town* sloshes about in warm-hearted muddle-headedness, *The Time of Your Life* (notice, by the way, that conspiratorial *Our* and folksy *Your* in the titles) gives us a whore, Kitty, the perfect embodiment of the play's absurd tergiversations. "She is a small powerful girl, with that kind of delicate and rugged beauty which no circumstance of evil or ugly reality can destroy." There follows something about her having that immortal element "which is in the seed of good and common people," as if the yoking of "good" and "common" were the most natural thing in the world. "There is an angry purity, and a fierce pride, in her." Joe, the central character of the play, who is more than a Greek chorus and rather like God or William Saroyan, "recognizes her as a great person immediately." So, above the whore with the heart of gold, an old lie we have learned to digest, we now get the whore who is immediately recognizable as a great person, a new and uncooked lie that sticks in the most undiscriminating craw.

But the play is full of such lies. There is the Arab, who fulminates against the stench of the world, but finds ready consolation in the stars and his harmonica. There is Elsie, the nurse who sees nothing but death at its meanest and doesn't believe in love, but who runs off hand in hand with Dudley to find happiness in a cheap hotel. There is Kit Carson, who is obviously a liar and a phoney, but who performs the one truly heroic deed of the play—shooting the villianous cop, Blick—and gets away scotfree. There is Nick, the tough bartender, who weeps at "None but the Lonely Heart"; and there is the lovable cop, Krupp, who thinks that "in this wonderful world . . . we're crazy. . . . We're no good any more." And after listing a string of horrors, our cop cops out

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—concedes that his wife is wonderful, his boys "the swellest," and asks that his foregoing outburst be forgotten. And so it goes, seesawing schematically, the whole thing glibly summed up by Joe: "Everything's right. Right and wrong."

That, of course, is too easy. Yet the general public, the You whose life and We whose town it is, are not even likely to remember this facile ambivalence. They are more likely to be left holding on to an exchange about a plucky little newsboy who dreams of being in show-biz and heart-rendingly renders "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling," Greek though he be. Comments Nick: "Joe, people are so wonderful. Look at that kid." Joe answers, "Of course they're wonderful. Every one of them is wonderful." Except that they are also crazy, nuts, dissatisfied, lousy, no good, wanting to make some kind of killing—all terms applied to them by the decent Officer Krupp. It all resolves itself into the gratuitous, meaningless schematism of "My, isn't life awful and wonderful" and all that jazz. As for the production of *Our Town,* it was passable, except for the hysterical Emily of Elisabeth Hartman, and the occasional anachronistic lapse in Donald Driver's direction. Some of the parents were, like the cast of *Three Men on a Horse,* a bit overripe for their parts but, clearly, such sentimental revivals appeal to old-timers, so any little cheating that will endear things to them is par for the course. Henry Fonda's Stage Manager was as comfortable as an old felt slipper, except in the area of the New England accent, where it pinched a little.

Why all these revivals, more of which are scheduled, and a couple of others of which I am coming to anon? They represent the hideous marriage of sentimentality and greed. When there is little new stuff that seems suitable for Broadway and the affluent middle-class, middlebrow, middle-aged audience that alone can foot its bills and stomach its fare, revivals are in. The delicate average stomachs may indeed be upset by the new, though it has never been proved that they could not be slowly accustomed to it; they are presumed to enjoy ruminating on their youth, and that, in the theatre, is the drama of the thirties and late twenties. So, if you join the sentimentality of these prosperous middle-everythings to the cupidity of the Box Office, to the unlimited greed of the producers and investors (many of whom partake also of the aforementioned sentimentality), you get the unholy matrimony I have in mind—a calculating marriage of convenience that is also incestuous, sterile, and stultifying.

One such revival, however, has merit; or, rather, the play has, though not the production. I mean *Private Lives,* originally an APA revival but brought to Broadway as a co-production with David Merrick—speak of unholy alliances! In a later introduction to his 1930 play, Noël Coward wrote:

It was described in the papers variously, as being "tenuous," "thin,"

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"brittle," "gossamer," "iridescent," and "delightfully daring." All of which connoted, to the public mind, "cocktails," "evening dress," "repartee" and irreverent allusions to copulation, thereby causing a gratifying number of respectable people to queue up at the box office. There is actually more to the play than this, however, but on the whole not very much.

I do not know whether this is a case of authorly modesty or parental blindness, but there is rather more than that to *Private Lives,* a play that ranks with the funniest comedies in the English language. For this play embodies all the irreverence, snobbishness, irresponsibility—the desperate frivolity of the between-the-wars generation, which we know also from the novels of Huxley and Waugh, for example, and which may be the last time a fusion of aristocracy and bohemianism, of social grace and scandalous insouciance existed in our world. A time to be verbal but also deliberately shocking, to have the most expensive tastes the better to go slumming with.

Coward has caught all this brilliantly; better yet, he does not wax sentimental over it. His Elyot and Amanda are spoiled and superficial children; the music they listen to, though "potent," is also "cheap," even if it happens to be one of Coward's own best songs; they are caddish and cowardly (Elyot), bitchy and provoking (Amanda). But they are charming and clever, and they have fun. Coward wisely refrains from assessments: they and their lives are neither "awful and wonderful" nor "wonderful and awful"; they just are. If they treat Sibyl and Victor disgracefully, there is some question of whether these simpletons do not, to some extent, deserve it, for in Act III, given half a chance, they carry on scarcely less fiendishly than their dashing mates. Indeed, their author himself treats them, as characters, with contempt, calling them "little better than ninepins, lightly wooden, and only there at all in order to be repeatedly knocked down and stood up again." Whereas Wilder and Saroyan gush over the little man—to say nothing of *Three Men on a Horse,* where the simple-minded greeting-card-doggerel-writer is positively slobbered over—in Coward he appears decent enough but benighted: Victor is pompous, Sibyl a prattler; where do they get the idea that they can cope with their clever spouses? While Coward is fully aware of the arrogance of the endowed, he is as blunt about the presumptuousness of the ordinary; and if he enthusiastically votes for the former, he has at least, however cavalierly, dramatized both points of view and explained his choice. From the American plays, it is by no means clear why or how the little people acquired their monopoly on goodness, happiness, and wisdom.

The current production is adequately directed by Stephen Potter as far as stage movement and business are concerned, but the performances, except for Suzanne Grossmann's highly effective Sibyl—bright surface, brittle pleasantness, irritating sweetness—are inadequate. David

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Glover's Victor is a mere boob. Brian Bedford's Elyot is not dapper, sexy, upper-class, or just plain prepossessing enough; there is little of that exquisite, weary finesse the part cries out for. But the disaster of the evening is the Amanda of Tammy Grimes: this always mannered actress has turned into the paragon of a butch, gay-bar diseuse, all growls, lisps, shlurps and honkings; all strutting, sashaying, swishing and posturing; and nothing whatever that is ladylike or feminine. Not very comely or alluring to begin with, she emerges as an absolute freak for the delectation of flagrant homosexuals who want women to be as outlandish, outrageous, monstrous as possible. And the frenzy with which the screaming queens, as well as less frenetic inverts, salute this wretched performance is as sorry an exhibition as you can see in any grind-house.

Private Lives is doing well, whether because there is a market also for revivals of good, sharp, cynical comedy, or whether because the passage of time and the bittersweet bliss of recalling the period of one's youth yield a patina that can sentimentalize even the most acerbic lines, I cannot say. Certainly the Revival Machine (soon to spew forth *Beggar on Horseback* and *Harvey* as well) presses relentlessly on, and anything is grist for its mill. Thus a flimsy little play by a boy barely out of his teens, Ron Cowen's *Summertree,* was revived a scant two years after its initial and amply sufficient run at Lincoln Center's experimental theatre, the Forum. Revived off-Broadway, the play got a rave review from Clive Barnes, and has been running partly on that, partly on the younger generation's brand of sentimental *attendrissement.* Not that they are trying to relive their happy youth of two years ago, but that this play about a sensitive youth who dies in Vietnam because his father won't send him to music school, whereupon he drops out of college and gets drafted, represents the flower child as martyr and elicits from the young the same kind of softheadedness *Three Men on a Horse* gets from their parents. To say nothing of the fact that a kid dumb enough to drop out of college just to spite his father deserves what he gets, the play makes little sense of any kind.

Summertree begins with the boy reviewing his life as he lies a-dying under a tree in Vietnam, which becomes the tree in the back yard back home, and his past is summoned up before him in sedulously trivial detail. Some of the scenes evoked, including one that takes place after his death, the boy could scarcely have witnessed. But it is not this or the jumbled order of scenes that makes the play nonsensical; rather, it is the relentlessly cute yet plodding retracing of every cliché about a mother-protected, father-misunderstood boy, complete with understanding but not quite understanding enough girl friend and precocious neighbors' kid who, exuding unconscious irony, serves as the hero's convenient alter ego. All this barely mitigated here and there by a certain youthful innocence. But, as someone perceptively remarked, Ron Cowen is destined to grow up into another Robert Anderson, alas.

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The commercial Broadway theatre has come up with almost nothing that has been able to catch on, let alone prove of marked interest. In the musical field, the only item even worth mention is *Coco,* a musical-comedy version of the life story of the dress designer, Coco Chanel, a story that does not have much story in it, and, as composed by André Previn, not much music. The book by Alan Jay Lerner, though crammed full of epigrams (some of which work, but most of which merely undermine one another) is empty of plot; his lyrics, as usual, are quite good. But the whole thing is mostly a pretext for Cecil Beaton to design spectacular scenery, which does just about everything, and costumes, which do everything except match those by Chanel herself—but, at the very end, Chanel's gowns do parade out to the rescue. Though there are nice supporting performances from George Rose and René Auberjonois, the whole thing hinges on the star, Katharine Hepburn, who alone sells tickets. Her act, however, is of that rotten-ripe sort that delights the lower reaches of the public and almost all reaches of the reviewing media. She punches, beams or weeps every line home as if she were a combination motor-, fire-, and water-works. I have elsewhere described her singing as *Schreckstimme,* and cannot improve on that description. Michael Bennett has devised some most engaging though scant choreography, and is definitely a man to watch; not so the director, Michael Benthall, a man to fall asleep by.

The straight drama, which on Broadway is just about synonymous with comedy, has produced two successful items. (A third one, Art Buchwald's *Sheep on the Runway,* a mild satire on American imperialism, may or may not prove a hit.) The first of these, *Butterflies Are Free,* is what the lower rungs of the commercial theatre should be occupied by: froth without any merit except that it is funny and thoroughly smoothly produced. Leonard Gershe has put unbelievable characters into incredible situations and resolved it all in a way impossible anywhere nearer life than an M-G-M sound stage. But the damned thing is amusing; Keir Dullea and Eileen Heckart give carefully shaped and structured performances as a gentle blind youth and his overprotective mother; and, as a delicious, messed-up teen-aged divorcee from California, Blythe Danner is absolutely right: zany urchin and warm-hearted girl, she is tough as well as soft, her one foot firmly planted in pristine naïveté, the other in primeval feminine knowingness. She is an actress of the stuff the Carole Lombards and Lynn Fontaines were made of, and what could augur better? The other successful comedy is Neil Simon's *Last of the Red Hot Lovers,* and marks a further stage in Simon's descent from the less than snowcapped eminence of his first comedies. This, too, is a play in which it is all for laughs, and the world well lost sight of, but unlike in *Butterflies,* one has the uncomfortable feeling that the author believes he is giving us shrewd truths about people. As a middle-aged, married and faithful nonentity looking for one sweet bout with adultry before age and irrevocable fidelity engulf him, James Coco, though physically unsuited

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to the part, gives another of his magisterial performances. I think that Coco is as good a comic actor as our stage possesses. Not only are his timing, inflections, gestures, facial play, body movements under perfect comic control, he can also, better yet, make every effect a little bigger, more grotesque, than strictly necessary, without, however, going beyond that credibility and dignity the forsaking of which reduces comedy to buffoonery.

Three foreign imports, all off-Broadway, are at least worth noticing. There was James Saunders' *A Scent of Flowers,* with patches of fine poetry brightening a rather coy and creaky plot; there were two early one-acters by the late Joe Orton, *Crimes of Passion,* which, had they been played by expert British actors, could have been nastily funny, though not up to Orton's best vein; and, again at Lincoln Center's Forum, Vaclav Havel's *The Increased Difficulty of Concentration.* This play by the Czech avant-gardist is much superior to his previously produced *Memorandum.* Tracing the breakdown of an eminent social scientist under the combined pressure of a trifurcated sex life and a computer brought round to his house to question him about his life (a computer that itself suffers numerous breakdowns despite a team of technicians nursing it as if it were an incubator baby), the play makes clever use of sociological jargon and of a time sequence so shrewdly scrambled that at first you hardly notice it, whereas later it gives you vertigo. The protagonist was well played by Harold Gould, who kept the character's dishonesty and pompousness subordinate to his not unpitiful humanity. Other performances varied in quality, but Mel Shapiro's direction was basically sound except for a lack of sufficient acceleration toward the frantic end.

Brief notice should also be given to a visit of William Ball's American Conservatory Theatre from San Francisco, which merely proved that this highly touted repertory company is provincial and erratic, and that the ingenious Mr. Ball, once the brightest hope of American directing, has not profited by his absence from New York, his leanings toward arch-cleverness and operatic overstatement having become unpleasantly exaggerated. *The Three Sisters* was thus, in many ways, made nonsense of; but even *Tiny Alice,* a play I considered so bad as to be foolproof, managed to get worsened. Proceeding with its American series, the Lincoln Repertory Theatre came up with *Camino Real,* a play so out of the mainstream that it does not qualify as a popular revival. Tennessee Williams' 1953 foray into conscious symbolism proved as devoid of characters or even good language, as disjointed, self-contradictory and aimless as before. On top of this, Milton Katselas underlined every bit of archness, artiness and wooden whimsy by directing for the greatest possible weirdness rather than toward some minimal sense. A few performances were respectable, some downright bad; but so preposterous is this play—so inconsistent even on a symbolic plane—that good performances make almost as little sense in it as

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bad ones. This attempt at programmatic avant-gardism—something wholly foreign to Williams' essentially naïve, spontaneous, noncerebral talent—has not even dated, never having had a date of any kind. But the limbo in which it takes place has ceased to irritate us even; it now merely leaves us stunned, as if a set of disembodied dentures were to address us from the ceiling.

The avant-garde of today has been at work in rather modest ways. It tends to go in for off-Broadway rock musicals, the best of which are *Salvation* and *The Last Sweet Days of Isaac*. *Salvation* is very much in the manner of *Hair:* an almost plotless affair in which, under the guise of an unorthodox revival meeting (the religion keeps changing, become irreligion, loses its nerve and reverts to some kind of Christianity), various skits and songs are acted out by four girls and four boys. Peter Link and C. C. Courtney, who wrote the book, lyrics and music, are probably more fresh than talented, more sassy than satirical, more ingratiating than witty, but, with the help of Paul Aaron's staging and Kathryn Posin's dance movements, something lively and pert emerges. Though the rock music is enough to split the Rock of Gibraltar, never mind a mere eardrum or two, some of the songs are quite lovely, and most of them are charmingly interpreted.

The Last Sweet Days of Isaac is much more daring and innovative—also more intelligent, witty and poetic. We are offered two one-act musical playlets, which, unfortunately, do not mesh as they are supposed to, and of which the first is far superior to the second. Still, the subject of both—our ceasing to *live* life, in order to experience it as tape recordings, photographs, films, and television broadcasts of ourselves, or, worse yet, others—though not exactly unique in today's thinking, is strikingly converted into stage images and sounds, into mirthful, whimsical, occasionally biting dialogue, and some pleasing rock songs. By poking fun at the very things it likes, and being amiably satirical about the things it is dead against, it achieves an absurd illumination, as if the highlights were stippled with charcoal and the shadows gleamed with unholy radiance. The performers, Fredricka Weber and Austin Pendleton, are splendid and play their tragicomic-strip characters with brimming care for every ridiculous detail. Nancy Ford's music is uneven: always bouncy, sometimes imaginative and affecting. Finally, it is the book and lyrics by Gretchen Cryer that make the show: daredevil lyricism jostles down-to-earth farce, timely gags coexist with surrealist conceits, and unbridled metaphysical foolery fiercely leeches on to our consciousness. The staging by Word Baker is effective, Ed Wittstein's scenery works well with the sparsest means, and a bunch of musicians that call themselves the Zeitgeist perform as rambunctiously as poltergeists. It is the most hopeful contribution to the season so far, and promises, in Gretchen Cryer at least, a first-rate talent with a combative yet compassionate vision, which smilingly exposes our social perversities, polymorphous and, above all, amorphous.

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Compared to this, Richard Schechner's *Makbeth*—snippets from Shakespeare's play, garbled, minced, eviscerated, assigned to semianonymous personages or chanted by a sometimes invisible chorus, the whole thing performed inside a jungle gym with the cast scurrying off in all directions when not rolling on the floor or hanging from crossbars—is very backward stuff. It is made up of Living Theatre, Grotowski, eurhythmics gone mad, and sheer impudence—and if we, the audience, did not sit around the tiers of that "environment" with the legs from the tier above dangling in front of us, there would be very little to watch. The Performance Group speaks the lines poorly, but it does scamper, wallow, prance and leap well enough for a small, provincial zoo.

Which brings me to Schechner's master, Jerzy Grotowski, whose Polish Laboratory Theatre came to New York on something not so much a visit as a visitation. About the Grotowski phenomenon—possibly the most deplorable in today's theatre, though certainly exceeded in repulsiveness by the groveling critical encomia and the ardor with which the idol's feet were licked by the public—I shall write in detail next time. Looking at Grotowski, I recalled the doubts of Henry James, then still a "Jr." and reporting from the Paris of almost a century ago. One might argue, he wrote, "that the happy time of the acted drama has passed away the world over." If Grotowski and his followers win out, there may still survive something resembling drama, but there will be guaranteed unhappy times in the theatre. Between the reargard sentimentalists and the avant-garde blood-ritualists, all joy will be crushed out of playgoing.

***Notes on Contributors** (cont.)*

country to receive the International Prize for Literature.

ROGER HOBDELL* lives in London and has had two books of poems published there by Scorpion Press, *Journey Beyond the Carapace* (1960) and *Sonnets* (1962). "Night Horse" is the last of a series of four poems to be called "Humbaba's Cabinet."

JOHN GARDNER* teaches in the Department of English at Southern Illinois University. He has a novel, *The Wreckage of Agathon,* coming from Harper & Row in the fall, and another, *The Sunlight Dialogues,* a little later. He is now working on a new novel called *The Smugglers of Lost Souls' Rock,* also on an opera (with Joe Baber) called *Frankenstein.*

JAMES WRIGHT's latest volume of poetry is *The Branch Will Not Break* (Wesleyan University).

NORMAN PORTER* emigrated to the United States from London in 1960. He has recently completed a play, "A Thousand Suns."

JUDITH HEMSCHEMEYER* is from Wisconsin and now lives in New York City with her husband (a free-lance film editor) and their two children.

CHARLES W. MILLARD is presently living in Paris; his next article for THE HUDSON REVIEW will be on Degas.

PATRICK CRUTTWELL teaches in the English Department of Kenyon College. He is spending the current year in Bristol.

ROGER SALE's *On Writing* was published by Random House earlier this winter; he is now working on a book on the history of Seattle.

Asterisk indicates a new contributor.

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STEPHEN FARBER

Couples

Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice has aroused more controversy than any American movie since *Bonnie and Clyde*. And this is no accident, for *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* may be the most original and important American movie since *Bonnie and Clyde*. Like Arthur Penn's attempt to use an outlaw story of the Depression to explore the radical, violent dissatisfaction and alienation of young people today, this comedy about the sexual revolution gets *at* something that American films have up to now evaded; it is genuinely contemporary and deeply disturbing.

Most of the successful American films this year—*Midnight Cowboy, Easy Rider, Medium Cool*—have been "social problem" pictures that tell the young, liberal, intelligent audience what it already knows—the contemporary city is squalid and inhuman, Southerners are bigoted and hostile to free-living hippies, the Chicago police are fascist pigs. An educated audience feels comfortably outraged and superior while watching these movies. Perhaps "social problem" films must always come a little late, after their truths have been absorbed by all but the silent majority. *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* may look less ambitious, less "serious," less technically innovative, but it cannot be condescended to; it implicates the educated audience more painfully than any other American film released this year. The writers Paul Mazursky and Larry Tucker (Mazursky also directed) expose themselves by searching into social changes that no one fully understands yet, ruthlessly testing themselves and challenging us to keep up with them.

At the opening of the film, Bob and Carol, two affluent Los Angeles swingers just past thirty, spend a weekend at a Big Sur Institute (modeled on Esalen), and an all-night marathon changes their lives. This sequence is conceived as a sort of comic utopian vision (the "Hallelujah" Chorus on the soundtrack over the titles is not entirely ironic): The Institute offers experiments in communication and relationships that seem to work in the abstract, in a close-to-nature control setting, for twelve hours at a time; we expect the rest of the movie to consider whether the experiments are adaptable to day-to-day living in the "real world." It is a classically simple comic premise, but Mazursky is too restless to leave it at that; he cannot help mocking his own utopia. The marathon group leader ("Well, 'group leader' is a little bit strong, I'm really your guide . . .") tells his charges, "We talk a lot about love, but we don't *feel* it a lot."

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They are all soon touching and groping and staring into each other's eyes, and when they sit around analyzing each other's problems, the guide interrupts the discussion regularly by asking, "What do you feel right now?" or "Tell Conrad what you feel—not what you think, what you *feel*." But he keeps the discussion genial and superficial; when one of the women begins to talk quite candidly about her sexual frustration, he cuts her off nervously and abruptly goes on to the next problem. This will be one of the film's most important, recurring concerns—the way in which the mentors of our age encourage us to identify our problems with complete honesty, then leave us to flounder with them in confusion. Honesty alone cannot change the direction of our lives.

The scene in which Bob and Carol's square friend Alice, disturbed by their new sexual freedom, visits the analyst, is crucial to an understanding of the film. For I think Mazursky and Tucker mean to say that the current obsession with sensitivity training and sexual liberation and experimental personal relationships is a consequence of a psychoanalytic age, in which the perceptions of the therapist have established an entire life-style for millions of people. An age that has learned to believe in nothing beyond the self soon begins to exalt the self, and every honest expression of feeling—no matter how trivial or banal—takes on a sense of mystical urgency. Like the group leader at the Institute, the psychiatrist wants Alice simply to say whatever she feels like saying at every moment; he refuses to impose a direction on the conversation. He does interrupt Alice's rambling with an occasional nasty question intended to shake her complacency. For example, after Alice has defensively insisted on her marital contentment, the analyst calls the implication of her words to her attention: "Are you aware that a moment ago you said, 'I *like* my husband and I *love* my child'?" Perhaps the question gives Alice a new perspective on her failing marriage. But is that enough? The analyst certainly does not seem able—or willing—to help her put that fresh insight to any use. Just as Alice begins to ask some questions of her own—why was she so upset about her friend's adultery, does this have anything to do with her growing frigidity—he cuts her off because her hour is up and he wants to continue the discussion next time.

It may be argued that the film is loaded because it only shows us one analytic session; when analysis goes on over a period of months or even years, there *is* enough time for these questions to be answered in some depth. But a film doesn't really have the same function as a balanced scholarly treatise on psychoanalysis. This scene, distorted, outrageous, but illuminating, succeeds in distilling out the *essence* of the analytic experience: We have to admit that analysis, by nature, involves the *raising* of questions and disturbances that cannot ever be fully resolved. A patient is limited to an hour at

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a time, and placed in a situation where the doctor remains always uninvolved, detached, "scientifically" tampering and prying, asking questions that he doesn't feel really pressed to answer. (The film's ridicule of the time-limit imposed on psychoanalytic soul-searching is not a petty criticism of the experience; it reminds us that this highly-charged emotional therapy is ruled, after all, by business considerations.) And whether you visit the analyst once or one thousand times, the limits and inadequacies of the experience can never be completely transcended. The analyst tempts people with the implicit promise that he can put their lives in order, and then he only succeeds in disorienting them a little more. For the psychiatrist makes no judgments, and prompts his patients to suspend their judgments too—Alice says late in the film that therapy has taught her not to impose her values on others; by implication, he encourages the same kind of bland, bloodless "objectivity" that is his own professional stance. In Bob and Carol's numb cooing of the word "beautiful" in response to every manifestation of feeling—hostility, affection, jealousy, embarrassment—we can see, without too much strain, a logical vulgarization of the passivity—misleadingly labelled "tolerance" or "open-mindedness"—that the analyst has led us to believe is our salvation.

All of this is not to say that Mazursky and Tucker are telling us that analysis is simply virulent. They can see that the revelation Alice takes from her analyst is a pertinent one, and *at the same time* question whether that limited insight is quite proportionate to the tremendous emotional energy and anticipation that she—or any patient—brings to the analytic session. The film is skeptical about the analyst without sacrificing a sympathetic awareness of why people need him. And this explains why the film involves us—it has no answers, only questions about some articles of the new liberal faith not usually open to question; it has a complexity we are unused to seeing in comedy. Even when *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* laughs at its characters, it sympathizes with their predicament, takes their problems seriously. That is, though the film is satiric, it is also thoughtful, agonized, and rueful—deeply *concerned.*

Analysis offers a chance at self-knowledge and a release from inhibition; and as the newly-liberated begin to be excited by the first flashes of "insight," they move on, as Bob says, to experiment in all areas of personal and sexual relationships—Esalen marathons, creative adultery, wife-swapping—trying to keep abreast of the sexual revolution. As the film casts a skeptical eye on these would-be revolutionaries of Eros, it sustains its thoughtful, complex point of view chiefly through the contrast of Bob and Carol, the up-to-date experimental couple, and their old friends Ted and Alice, the squares who seem to have slept through the sixties. By stylizing and exaggerating the repression and hypocrisy of Ted and Alice, the film makes it

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impossible for us to feel very sentimental about middle class marital mores of the past. The marriage of Ted and Alice is a superficially amiable horror: Alice can no longer bear to be touched, Ted is tremendously frustrated, both are envious of their friends' freedom without being able to acknowledge that they crave some of the same thrills. The painfully long bedroom scene in which Ted practically has a nervous breakdown trying to cajole, seduce, beg Alice to have sex with him at first seems peripheral to the main themes of the film, though it is hilarious; but this scene indirectly helps to explain what Bob and Carol are groping for at the Institute and in games of musical beds. Mazursky draws the scene out, caustically accentuates the sexual anxiety that is one of the "normal" problems of long-term marriage, in order to make us sympathetic to Bob and Carol's frantic search for kicks outside marriage.

But at the same time, the film wittily exposes the excesses and absurdities into which Bob and Carol's search for new values carries them. The two scenes of Bob and Carol puzzling over their responses to each other's adultery superbly capture the chaos of the permissive society. When Bob arrives home after his affair with his assistant film editor in San Francisco, the scene opens with a long, apparently irrelevant bit in which their little boy comes in to get his present and Bob puts him back to bed. The scene is played with remarkable tact and tenderness—it reveals director Mazursky's genuine regard for people—and I think it lasts so long simply to remind us what a natural, affectionate human relationship looks like. It is one of the only relaxed moments between two people in the entire film, and it is both comical and depressing that none of the adults ever relate to each other as directly. For when Bob and Carol sit back to discuss his affair, they become ludicrously detached and pompous—so intense about ferreting out and deciphering their hidden motives and prejudices that there is no time left for a spontaneous *response*. "What do I feel?" Carol wonders. "I don't feel upset. I don't feel surprised. I don't feel jealous." But since she is having a little trouble deciding just what she *does* feel, she asks Bob to tell her the story again. Bob and Carol's solemn, strenous effort to arrive at the True Response gives a trace of surrealist lunacy to their "enlightened" marriage. They are so mastered by their sophisticated analytic language that adultery no longer stimulates anger, tears, or even laughter, only a tortured intellectual discussion. And this is the most devastating irony implicit in the games of the new young marrieds: In spite of their obsession with "What do I *really* feel?" almost nothing that they do or say seems to grow out of genuine feeling.

The sequence concerning the analysis of Carol's affair is even more comically convoluted. Bob's first reaction is outrage and jealousy; he feels Carol has only had an affair to match him (which

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is at least partly true), and he shows he is not quite free of the traditional male double standard. We may laugh at Bob's inconsistency, and yet this is one moment in the film when at least he *is* responding honestly—not with the words a liberated adult is expected to say, but with the illogical, unadmirable resentment that he really feels. When he calms down, has one of his periodic "insights" and realizes that Carol's affair was "purely physical," and therefore no threat to him, he congratulates her for being open enough to have the affair right in her own house—he, after all, had to do it "in a cheap hotel room"—and decides that he wants to have a drink with her lover. As Bob tries to chat genially with the tennis instructor in the bedroom where he and Carol have just had intercourse, the discomfort of all three people is excruciating. Again the film's satire is very delicately and thoughtfully balanced. It may be "mature" to respond so sympathetically to your wife's casual adultery, but is it human?

Finally, at the film's climax, Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice are together in a hotel room in Las Vegas, when Alice, on the road to liberation through analysis, a little relaxed by liquor, and envious of the adulterous affairs that all the other three have confessed, takes her clothes off and suggests that they carry their sexual freedom to its logical extreme: "Let's have an orgy and then go hear Tony Bennett." We already know from a Freudian slip she made at the analyst's that she is attracted to Bob, but the others are at first shocked by her suggestion. They insist that they love each other as friends only, but Alice yells "Copout!"—the refrain-like cry of the characters in this film, the challenge to anyone who seems to be hiding his true feelings. And under her prodding, they finally come around. As Carol undresses, she tells herself, "It's nice feelings, it's something we've never done before, it's physical fun." Bob concurs: "We're supposed to experience everything." And even inhibited Ted proves persuadable. So the four of them change partners and hop into one giant Vegas-luxurious double bed.

But after some preliminary kissing, they all exchange guilty, embarrassed looks, get up and get dressed again—a conclusion that has all the Bobs and Carols in the audience screaming "Copout!" Since *The Graduate,* nothing is easier for a mass audience movie than to put down middle class morality. But there may be moments when some leftover from "middle class morality"—like Bob's initial jealous reaction to Carol's affair—comes closer to expressing a valid emotional response than the New Amorality. Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice don't really want to have an orgy. It is something they'd like to try, not because they are actually attracted to each other, but because the new permissive morality says they *can* try it, and because "it's something we've never done before." Remember Bob's words: "We're *suppos*ed to experience everything." In the

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previous scene Carol protested when Bob accused her of using adultery as a form of sexual oneupsmanship: "No, I *wanted* to do it." But in the next breath she contradicted herself without realizing it: "I wanted to *see* if I could do it." The sexual revolution puts you on the defensive, makes you feel obligated to experiment even when you are not really so inclined.

The film is *not* saying that wife-swapping is harmful or "wrong" in traditional moral terms. When the characters draw back, it is not out of prudishness or hypocritical guilt, but because they have asked themselves some truly pertinent questions: Suppose they expressed this whim? Would it really revive them, give more meaning to their lives? What would it solve? And more important, after the orgasm was over, could they carry on as before? Perhaps they could, but perhaps there would be a strain. At any rate, they realize the chance may be a little too much to be worth taking; their friendship, which means something to all of them, could be soured for an unguaranteed thrill. The only one of the four who may really *want* to go through with the sex is Alice. But given her neurosis, what kind of effect would adultery have on her? It would probably only make her more dissatisfied with her own marriage—a dissatisfaction that could lead to nothing but greater pain for her. For after all, she does not want to give up her marriage. And what is even more to the point, Bob is not interested in her; he genuinely loves Carol, not Alice. The swingers in the audience who call the ending a copout cannot quite manage the film's skepticism. They feverishly hope that by confessing their true feelings and by taking an open-minded, "no judgment," "experience everything" attitude toward sex, they are moving toward total understanding and freedom, toward greater maturity as human beings. The film unsettles us by challenging those assumptions, forcing us to see that there is no inevitable salvation in analysis or adultery or orgy. And the film does this without ever calling for a return to puritanism. Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice simply realize that fashionable intellectual theories about sex have pushed them into a situation that they are not quite ready for, that is not in fact in touch with their feelings. When they realize that not every experiment is worth making, we respect them for the first time.

Unfortunately, the film does not end on that realization. As Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice leave the hotel room, fully clothed again, Mazursky brings up the music, Jackie de Shannon singing "What the World Needs Now Is Love, Sweet Love . . ." and when the couples reach the lobby of the hotel, they are joined by a cheerful procession of humanity (including the film-makers) that seems meant as a Fellini-like carnival of joyous affirmation. You can use the words of Burt Bacharach's song to read into the film some kind of final statement about the superiority of love to sex that does

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seem unpleasantly moralistic in a way that cheapens the rest of the film. And the happy expressions on the faces of the four principals suggest a total reconciliation to life that is equally out of keeping with the bitterness of earlier scenes. When Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice decide not to go through with their orgy, the moment is true because it is ambiguous and severe, filled with no promise of redemption, no woolly generalizations about the sanctity of marriage and the conventional life. But the Fellini-like parade is too buoyant, cancelling out the ambiguity of the preceding scene with a rousing, love-dripping finale.

Mazursky and Tucker may feel that because they are making a comedy, they have a responsibility to resolve something at the end, put the world back in order. The virtue of this film is its skepticism, its refusal to settle for an easy response to anything. But skeptical films are not very easy to end; so you either force an overly tidy resolution, as Mazursky and Tucker do here, or you evade it altogether, as they did at the end of *I Love You, Alice B. Toklas,* when the hero, disillusioned by both middle-class life and hippie life, simply began to *run*—where he might go was anybody's guess—as the end-titles came on. Neither solution is acceptable, but probably there *is* no satisfying resolution to this kind of film. Other artists, with different assumptions, may still be able to direct their work toward a cathartic finale; for the skeptics, it will have to be enough to open a wound without expecting to heal it again.

This is not a director's film. Visually it's competent and slick and anonymous; in the year of Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* and Haskell Wexler's *Medium Cool,* this movie *looks* like something from an earlier era (which has led some reviewers to call it an updated Doris Day comedy). Its content is what makes it original and memorable. And it's filmed very simply—long confrontation scenes with a minimum of tricky interference—so that the emphasis will be on the dialogue and on the actors' faces. Mazursky and Tucker trained with the Second City, and *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* is structured on the pattern of cabaret theater. But the film grows into something richer and more coherent—a brilliant, fully-realized comic vision of disorientation in a carefree, guilt-free world where people who can say and do anything find that they do not really know what they *want* to do, and that the renewal they hunger for so desperately still lies just beyond their grasp.

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CHARLES W. MILLARD

The New Boston: City Hall

THE NEW BOSTON CITY HALL is a superb building. Despite its small size relative to the buildings around it, it is the focus of the entire Government Center development and, in many ways, the paradigm and crystallization of that development. Located in one corner of an eight-acre, brick-paved plaza, which is graded and shot through with steps in such a way as to form a monumental staircase descending from Beacon Hill to the North End, City Hall synthesizes a number of contradictory elements. It embodies classical order and modernist irregularity, traditional and contemporary materials, rugged massiveness and an almost playful spatial continuity, deep shadow and intense highlight, in what is probably the most successful architectural expression yet conceived of the contradictory nature of present-day government, with its conflicting bureaucratic and symbolic functions.

The need for a new City Hall in Boston was felt as early as the 1930's and was the initial impetus for the creation of all of Government Center and, indeed, in many ways for the entire Boston redevelopment plan. The architectural and symbolic importance of the building was felt to be such that it was the only Government Center structure opened to a competition—the first competition for a major American public building since 1909. I. M. Pei, who had been in charge of planning the Center, specified the building's location, volume, and overall dimensions. The rest, including the planning of the plaza, was left to the winning architects, Kallmann and McKinnell, then of New York, now of Boston. Their basic design premise was that City Hall, while containing the complex of agencies and quantities of people necessary for modern city administration and expressing architecturally its necessary symbolic role, belonged to the citizens of Boston. It was thus clear that access to the building from ground level had to be as unrestricted as possible and that there were three major functions to be served—public, ceremonial, and bureaucratic. The entire plan and most of the architectural forms of City Hall were generated from these requirements.

Brick is the traditional Boston building and paving material, and it was decided that City Hall plaza be paved in brick, with its steps picked out in concrete. Since City Hall's south lobby, its main entrance, is basically an extension of the plaza, it too is paved in brick and all the major public areas—licensing bureaus, etc.—located on the

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series of half levels descending to the north lobby are paved in brick-red ceramic tile to maintain continuity and guide the visitor through those areas open to him. Nestled in and around the lower reaches of City Hall are the windowless bulks of those agencies in most frequent contact with the public, all made of brick, so that they seem to rise out of the plaza and lock it into the concrete of which most of City Hall is made. Save for the two entrance lobbies, which open onto the plaza through large areas of plate glass, all these public areas are skylit, thus furnishing another cue for the visitor, and guiding him through the building with a thread of overhead daylight. If one were to proceed through the building from the north to south lobbies, the sequence of skylights would culminate in the spectacular shaft rising the full height of the building just inside the main entrance, flooding the south lobby with diffused light. This succession of public spaces, floored in red and daylit, is essentially an indoor street onto which the relevant city agencies open, and has been called by the architects themselves a "Galleria." The remaining brownstone-trimmed brick shapes at the base of the building are firestairs or staircases leading to the unenclosed courtyard by means of which one can pass through the building twenty-four hours a day. These brick masses serve as blocks to entering the building, calling attention by their absence to the major points of entry.

Those administrative and bureaucratic functions with a minimum of public contact are housed on the upper floors of City Hall, behind rows of windows masked by regularly-spaced, paired fins. The outer appearance of these upper floors, reached by elevator rather than stairs, immediately suggests a modern office building and, hence, the activities that take place within. It is this upper part of the building that most completely relates it to the newer office buildings around it, which are uniformly conceived as large anonymous structures faced with identical, repetitive window units. In the case of City Hall, this upper office unit and the lower public areas account for something like 85 or 90% of the program, although they are architecturally the least assertive portions of the building. On their exterior façades the office floors are stepped out one over the other to form a sort of gigantic cornice or protective overhang, and the top floor is capped with a flat fascia of pre-cast panels which "finishes off" the building. The stepping out of the office floors is responded to in the interior courtyard by a progressive stepping back which allows more light and air for those floors and provides balcony-like outdoor areas for relaxation. Although the two upper floors continue regularly around all four sides of the rectangular building, the lowest office floor is interrupted in different places by projections housing various of the ceremonial functions, thus varying what might have been a too-repetitive rhythm and knitting the building more firmly together. The entire upper portion of City Hall is raised on thin but deep piers which rise directly out of

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the brick plaza, sometimes seeming to pierce one or another of the brick public structures.

Through these piers, and between the areas of the building devoted to public and to administrative purposes, project the bold, hooded concrete shapes in which are housed the major ceremonial functions—the Council Chamber, the Councilmen's offices, and the two offices reserved for the Mayor. While these are far and away the least parts of the building in terms of volume, they are the most commanding visually as befits their symbolic nature. The mask-like form of the Council Chamber, with its deep, raked window reveals, is the most obvious feature of the west (principal) facade of the building. The shallow stepping down necessary for the rows of seats in the Chamber is expressed on the underside of this projection, so that as one enters City Hall there is a gradual constriction caused by the reduction in ceiling height and the rising of the entrance steps that serves to accentuate the explosion of light and space one encounters on entering the lobby. At the southeast corner of City Hall there are two major sets of projected forms, one each on the south and east sides, that contain the Mayor's offices. These are arranged so that the Mayor looks in one direction at State Street and the banks and office buildings of Boston's commercial center, and in the other at Faneuil Hall market and the sea. In the first case, the intention is to bring to the attention of whoever holds the office the source of Boston's present wealth and power. In the second, it is to remind him of Boston's past, its people, and its maritime tradition. In both, the conscious intention of the architects was to relate their building to the city around it, and they are particularly fond of pointing out how the office projecting from the east side of the building seems to hold a dialogue with Faneuil Hall. While the connection is perhaps more fancied than real—the scale of even this part of City Hall is much greater than that of Faneuil Hall—the visual effect from within the building is powerful enough, and there is something to be said for the fact that the ceremonial projections from City Hall are related to the entire building in somewhat the same way that Faneuil Hall is related to smaller buildings around it.

Facing City Hall from the west one can just see that the building is divided in half at plaza level. Two courtyards are the result of this division. That on the right, enclosed in glass, is the south lobby. That on the left is entirely open and forms a permanent passage through the structure. It is approached by a flight of broad, shallow steps rising out of the plaza, and ends on the east side by a steep staircase leading to New Congress Street. In both cases, two vast uninhabited areas are created, specifically intended by the architects to accrue the collection of ceremonial oddities one normally finds in governmental structures. Even now, the south lobby is graced with two Japanese stone lanterns given by Kyoto, Boston's sister city. In both cases, also, one can see directly through the building and out toward the harbor

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as one stands in the plaza. The south lobby is largely taken up with a broad monumental staircase, the steps of which surround two sides of the lobby and form a sort of amphitheatre. This again is specifically intended by the architects (one wonders about the reaction of the city fathers) to be the scene of demonstrations, lobbying, picketing, and the other more active aspects of participatory democracy. Finally, since City Hall is surrounded with buildings considerably taller than itself, the roof is conceived as a sort of fifth façade and treated in such a way that when looked down upon it has hardly less spatial and volumetric interest than the rest of the building.

The means by which this variety of shapes and spaces is unified, and the idea from which it is all generated, is a modular structural system of extreme simplicity and flexibility. A grid system created by paired beams crossing at right angles gives rise to almost every feature of the building. Horizontally, this grid is apparent in ceilings throughout City Hall, both internal and external. By piercing openings in the depth of the beams, allowance is made for the passage of pipes, ducts, and mechanical equipment, and because the ceilings are not closed easy access to this equipment is assured. The small squares at the intersections of the paired beams are frequently used to house lighting. Projected vertically, the system produces the paired fins of the upper floors, which also house heating, air conditioning, etc., and it dictates the placing of the piers supporting the building. Since a support is not required at every pair of beams, the placement of these piers can be varied a great deal, and at times they are used to make an alternating bay system, at times they are spaced regularly, and at times they are placed wholly irregularly. Both these piers and the fins of the upper floors, placed at right angles to the imaginary planes of the façades, give a sense of depth and protection when one is looking out from inside. Even the scribed concrete pour joints occur at floor levels or other places bearing some relation to the basic modular system. Within the constraint of their system, however, the architects have achieved the utmost freedom in the placing of elements, allowing a visually random interpenetration of forms and spaces that gives their building immense liveliness.

Although it is the smallest of the new buildings in Government Center, City Hall is the largest in scale. Because it stands in a vast open space one is not aware of its massiveness until one is immediately under it. Its power and muscularity is particularly evident from New Congress Street, the lowest point surrounding the building, from whence it rises straight up like a gigantic cliff. On this side of City Hall, however, the effect is ameliorated by the long brick horizontals of the public spaces, some of which seem to pierce the concrete piers. Elsewhere, the use of brick and the cluster of small elements around the base of the building serve to make a transition so that its scale is not overpowering. In general, the accommodation of the building to

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its surroundings and to its users is entirely congenial, and instead of being forbidding its scale makes for a kind of exciting monumentality. Furthermore, the space of the plaza and that of the building interpenetrate so that the plaza seems to be eating into the building, and there is no sense of being put off, as with a fortress. Finally, the number of fins along the upper storeys makes the scale smaller at the top than at the bottom, avoiding any feeling of topheaviness.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about a building as massive and as systematic as the new Boston City Hall is the finesse with which forms and spaces are related to one another. There is a kind of interpenetration or interlocking which welds the various parts of the building into a whole as firmly joined as a Chinese puzzle. We have already noted the interpenetration of the three parts of the building—how the brick elements both push into the building and rise up against it, overlapping the concrete shapes of the second level. These, in turn, invade the space of the upper storeys in various ways. Throughout the building there are elements which interlock without joining, such as the brick stair tower and the elements of the Mayor's south office, rather in the manner of a yin-yang symbol. There is also an intricate spatial interpenetration in which interior and exterior spaces join with themselves or each other to make a flowing succession which runs uninterruptedly in three dimensions through the building, up to its roof, and out onto the plaza. This is emphasized by patterns of light and cast shadow, which break up the solid forms into an infinitely variable succession of interlocking shapes. If one could speak of a Cubist effect in architecture, this building approaches it closely—the careful locking together of numerous elements which frequently shade imperceptibly into one another.

Although City Hall has only recently been occupied and it is as yet difficult to tell how all its parts will function, there are relatively few places where one can find fault esthetically. The painted metal window mullions seem somehow finicky and tacky in finish on such a bold building. In many places the difference between pre-cast and poured-in-place concrete is evident, to the detriment of the former. The fascia panels at the top of the building look thin, and their shallow incised coffers repeating the pattern of the beam openings seem superficial. In general, the skylighting in the public spaces is not as effective as it might be, partly because the skylights get dirty easily, partly because for the most part they open into the inner courtyard rather than directly to the sky, and partly because they are so deep and divided into such small units that the amount of light that can enter is somewhat restricted. But these are minor quarrels with what is essentially a very fine building indeed.

To judge City Hall's success as an urban symbol and as architecture, one need only think of it in relation to other buildings. First of all, there is its position as the most important building in Government

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Center. In its wholly modernist use of space within a planned and consistent framework, City Hall exactly reflects the general calculated informality of the larger area. In this way it reflects also the larger context of Boston architecture in general, with its reserved but flexible character. Faced with the problem of creating a meaningful symbol for the city, the architects have thought the problem through in wholly contemporary terms. Their site, far from being the traditional hill or eminence, was a bowl-like depression, a hillside that is in many ways a place of passage from one part of the city to another. Clearly the outmoded symbolism of domes and columns was inappropriate not only to the time but to the place. Instead, the architects have analyzed contemporary civic structure into three components and have given meaningful expression to those components in a single building which both keeps the expected classical order and opens itself to the people for whom it is intended. There is a very real sense in which City Hall is permanently open. By contrast, one need only think of the recently completed Toronto City Hall, two concave high-rise office towers facing each other across a saucer-domed circular council building. A straightforward enough expression of traditional dual chamber government, it completely misses the relevance to the contemporary situation achieved by Boston's building. Furthermore, its plaza is surrounded by a raised walkway which cuts it off visually from the rest of the city. As to the classical quality of Boston's City Hall, it is, on the surface, a quality of which we have seen a good deal in contemporary architecture. Yamasaki's Woodrow Wilson building at Princeton, for example, is an almost literal transcription of a classical temple. More to the point, both functionally and qualitatively, is John Carl Warnecke's State Capitol for Hawaii, a building of roughly the proportions of the Boston City Hall. Suavely enough detailed, Warnecke's building misses by restricting itself to a regular system of supports which mask what goes on within. The genius of Kallmann and McKinnell's building is that it clearly reveals its internal workings, both by analogy and by direct statement, while keeping a skeleton of post and lintel construction. Its nearest relative is perhaps Corbusier's monastery at La Tourette, as has already been pointed out more than once, but if Kallmann and McKinnell fall short of Corbusier's absolute greatness as an innovator, they are far too good to be mere imitators. In the Boston City Hall they have produced a building of great quality that is wholly engaged both with its particular program and with the nature and requirements of the city around it.

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VERNON YOUNG

Films from Hungary and Brazil

MIKLOS JANCSO, HUNGARIAN, makes film of men going about their work. Their work is slaughter. What endows his art with its macabre distinction is the un-vulgar curiosity with which he observes their grave, professional pursuit of this occupation. If from time to time we did not witness, often with blank amazement, the precise consequences of their actions (as they crumple up or spin under the impact of bullets) we might well wonder what strange serious game these men are playing, out there in the middle of a savanna nowhere, marching back and forth, galloping up and down, lining each other up, interrogating and informing, sorting themselves into squads, unsorting themselves, getting into feverish huddles and standing helplessly against walls. Hungarian prisoners and their Austrian captors, (c. 1868), packed into a compound on a plain, lonely as the ocean, remind us oddly of other occasions when, to a spectator, there is something altogether absurd in the oblivious solemnity with which the participants in a busy-busy act comport themselves: a meeting of rival labor unions, for example, at which it is to be decided whether or not they will accept a construction job from a cartel with notorious political affiliations; or, the preliminary stages of a film to be shot on location, when local talent is being assigned to the cavalry unit or considered for speaking parts. In Jancso's contest, however, the reward is somewhat more crucial than the domination of CIO delegates by those of the AFL, or a stand-in job for someone who is content not to be photographed if he has day-long opportunity for apple-polishing the assistant director and smelling the leading actress; the issue here (I am describing *The Round-Up,* 1965) of all the backing and filling, the pike-trailing and secret sessions, the inquisitions and the betrayals, is nothing less than a lease on life. (Although few, in the end, procure it.) The primary object, if anything so categorical can be defined in a Jancso action, is to find someone in this pen of outlaws and peasants who can identify a former resistance leader named Sandor who may or may not be among them, who may or may not be known to them as Sandor, who may or may not be alive, even. Hence, the bargaining, the cross-examinations, the escorting of prisoners from one cell to another, to an exercise yard or to a sun-blessed wall against which they are targets in relief, is all about nothing or about something so nebulous that it serves only as a means for the officers, time heavy on their hands, to refine their already considerable skill at eliciting confessions without drawing blood.

The Red and the White (1967) is a much richer film, if equally dispassionate; the engagements are more deadly, the rhythms and

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counter-rhythms more sharply syncopated—of men on horseback and other men on foot, fleeing them, of pursuers tramping confidently up wooden staircases and across bridges, the pursued running, like sheep without collies, around fatal enclosures. The political situation which informs these rhythms is an interlude, so to speak, during the post-Revolution battles of Reds and Whites, involving the desertion of numerous Hungarians to the cause of the Bolsheviks, to preserve their own future liberty. I can't believe Jancso is not fully aware of the irony he is supporting. Naturally the film (co-produced by *Mafilm,* Budapest and *Mosfilm,* Moskva) is intended to glorify the solidarity of peoples' republics; its nominal subject is the systematic elimination of Red resistance in the area of battle Jancso has chosen (somewhere around the upper Volga). A skirmish opens the film, Cossacks chasing winded Reds across a river to the other bank. When the head Cossack overtakes one of his fugitives he demands to know his nationality: "Are you Russki, Austrian—what are you?" On being told the man is Magyar, he orders him back into the river. "Go on, get into the river," he tells him, indifferently. The Hungarian runs with dispatch into the river which is, after all, the escape route. The Cossack shoots him, unerringly, as he reaches waist-deep water. Efficient. No exposed corpse, no time out for burial. Much of the burden in this film is the White Russian complaint: "This is not your war! Why don't you go back where you came from?"

The required partisan slant in *The Red and the White* gives little encouragement save to the single-minded (I almost wrote the simple-minded). Death comes too quickly and casually for us to decide what our feelings about it *ought* to be, and on both sides there are moments of equal reluctance to kill as well as moments of shocking ruthlessness. I couldn't have cared less how many Reds or Whites *as such* were done to death; in a film—at least in Jancso's film—one's sympathy is involved *at the moment.* Are they actually going to execute this stalwart if bewildered young man with all that serviceable muscle packed around his shoulder blades? Not that you are concerned because he's a Red, but because he's flesh. Are you pleased now to see the Cossack who shot the Magyar and was about to have a girl raped on a windy hill in his turn told to remove his boots and pray? Not actually. You share his surprise and you can't help but admire his scornful grunt and the way he stands before the levelled rifles, as if posing for his photo, one hand on hip, chin tilted disdainfully in the air. When they shoot he does a little skip, like a puppet crudely animated by an inexperienced operator.

This thoughtful White Russian staff captain who, alone, never wears a hat, as if he likes the caress of the breeze in his hair and walks, hands clasped behind, like an idle country priest: a courteous man whom we want to like. We *do* like him. But what horror might he not now be preparing as, on his orders, his jaunty adjutant herds a group of nurses from the outpost hospital far into the woods to the

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accompaniment of the military band? There, in a clearing among the spectral birches—he invites them to waltz, with each other; just waltz! "You have the music, no? *Valz, valz!*"—he snaps his fingers impatiently. So they waltz with each other, self-consciously to be sure. Some don't know how or they're embarrassed or they don't want to or they're frozen with fright. Two of them do very well: very well indeed. Is the staff captain delighted? This has been arranged for his pleasure, after all, or was it for that of the women or for the onlooking men? We never learn. His face doesn't alter its habitually puckered expression. The wind ruffles his hair. He nods to the adjutant. This gallant snaps his fingers again. "You may go home now." And the ladies melt away among the palings of the ivory birches. . . . Later, the staff captain finds it necessary to threaten a few of these females with death unless they identify the active Reds among their casualties. To his regret they are not cooperative; he finds them very difficult. Sighing, he gives them a chance to change their minds. "Go away, stand over there," he tells one of them solicitously. "This is nothing for *you* to see." Lying on the ground are ten half-stripped male patients from the hospital. They are shot dead as they lie there rigidly staring at the sky. Perhaps some of them were already dead; two scissor upward in reflex, the others remain as horizontal as before. Out of nowhere, on the other side of the river, a troop of riderless horses comes over the hill, stirring dust; where are the riders? As the staff captain studies the situation appraisingly, not yet suspicious, the bullets of the enemy strike him. He has barely time to complain before hitting the ground, his face puckered more than usually, hands to his midriff as though an intensely sour apple had just reached his intestinal tract.

Jancso's camera runs parallel with his action, you might say. When you most expect and fear that it will confront you with a horror you don't want to face, it keeps its distance; sometimes it paces like a caged leopard kept from the kill by a barrier against which it rubs in vain; it stares hungrily over the heads of those interposing mortals, who make such strange noises, at a something beyond—not quite identifiable but surely edible. When a man is told to jump into a stream from a low platform and, as he goes under, an officer drives a long fish-gaff through him, Jancso is not eager to crowd in and see the damage. We watch the episode from a hundred feet away, groaning with relief at his comparative tact. I can think of no director since Jacques Becker (unless it be the Buñuel of *Viridiana*) who makes us so quake with the thought of what his camera might next reveal—but in Jancso's case does not—not directly and never with relish. Jancso's interest is not sadistic. I am not at all sure it is compassionate. Did Leonardo feel compassion when he accompanied men to their death to sketch the expression on their faces? Jancso's immediate aim is the creative arrangement of incongruities, in the shadow of death; the pity and the wonder arise from the spectacle of men who earnestly

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believe that they kill what they are killing or earn what they are dying for. If Jancso were not so resolutely on the perimeter of driving emotions, I should be tempted to call him the Kurasawa of Eastern Europe. He shares Kurasawa's sense of bodily momentum, his feeling for space in a shot, either to exalt or to reduce the value of figures isolated in it; he likes to balance a spare composition against a crowded one or, for instance, to track vis-a-vis a troop of charging cavalry as the shifting lie of the land bends their formation, making them race diagonally up the wide-screen, lower right to upper left, then sharply down, the dynamic flow switching its direction from a climb to a plunge. He cuts very seldom within a sequence limited to a confined area. The continuity in which the Cossack prepares the girl for rape only to be forestalled by his superior officer cantering into the scene is conducted with one steadily observing and discreetly gliding gaze.

A highly rational acquaintance (Nordic) accompanied me to one showing of *The Red and the White*. He was impressed, with reservations. It was all so surreal, he thought; there were things, he said vaguely—motivations, customs, military details—which did not satisfy his sense of logic. I finally told him: "Slavs and Magyars, and you expect logic! You want egg in your beer!" Effects of the kind managed by Jancso were described by Tolstoi as "making it strange," as if this were an exercise you could choose to indulge or not, a calculated option of the literary intelligence. At any moment I can personally note, in the world of event, the bizarre collisions noted by Jancso. But I do not see the world that way all the time! There is evidence for concluding that men of one culture make consistently different selections from reality than men of another culture. I believe that Jancso arrived at his mode of perception, beyond the circumstance that he is an *artist* (whose job is to organize incongruities) because he was born at the other end of the Danube. I suggest that the whole theatre of action in which the East European mind pursues its destiny might be called "making it strange."

At the Berlin Film Festival in 1965 I saw among the trade-showings (of films intended for commercial appraisal) the last two-thirds of a wild, weird film from Brazil, *Black God, White Devil,* and a film from, of all places, Colombia, entitled *Voice of Anxiety:* dry, powerful, relentless. When I reported to many of my should-I-say colleagues that the two best films I had seen at this Festival were from South America, in a trade show, they looked at me as if I were working to be exclusive, showing off—making it strange! The sequel followed, as I expected. I've been through this before. (You think I like film critics any better than Bergman does?) Less than a year later, *Cahiers du Cinema* took up South American films and published interviews with Glauber Rocha (director of *Black God, White Devil*). Now, three years after, the critics who never went near the trade shows and

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never discover anyone before being clued in by the French are scolding exhibitors because they don't buy Brazilian films, and museum film societies are trying to interest *avant-garde* members in South American film to fill the gap left by the successive vogues of Bergman, Antonioni and Jean-Luc Godard. Glauber Rocha is the favorite and I suspect that he will not be as easy to sell as some of the previous objects of Bohemian admiration. The appeal of his films is allegedly in their covert incitement to Revolution. Their treatment, from the little I know of it, will scarcely recommend Rocha to Northern Marxists or their dropout cohorts. The Catholic ethos, to say nothing of the bloodthirstiness and the Portuguese Baroque trimmings, is not a proclivity of your typical Anglo-American film critic who, when he's not Jewish, is Protestant or sniffily secular. I am not yet willing to accept Rocha as the leading light of the "New Brazilian Film," since I've seen less than one of his works and I recall with disgust the French directors of the early Sixties who were ignored and possibly stopped in their tracks by critics who thought and looked at film *factionally*.[1] I'm not prepared to write conclusive summaries of the Brazilian film movement. I'm feeling my way. As evidence, I add here notations on two films from Brazil which, if far from superlative, may be exemplary.

The Time and Hour of Augusto Matraga (1966), directed by Roberto Santos. This, I gather, may be the type of cliché South American film, seriously dedicated but wanting in talent. I say South American because, long before *The Bandit* (1951) established, I believe, a mode of Brazilian sardonic melodrama, I had seen not a few films from Argentina with similar ingredients (probably the sources are in the literature): the excessive cruelty, depicted with no mitigation or remorse from the director, who clearly delighted in recreating it at length and up close; the alternating stiff-backed pride and the howling abandon of men taunted to outbursts of horrible revenge; the simple power distinctions—those who ride horseback, those who ride mules, those who walk; the Chaucerian archetypes: the *padron,* the priest, the peon, the bandit, the vituperative whore, the withered, maternal crone; the framing of an action as ballad in order to lend it distance, give it poetry, stress its legendary aspect to cheat the political censor (this may be a recent twist, developed by Rocha); the burning hatred of Church prerogative and counsel but the retention of a Catholic super-structure, fatalistic and ultimately redemptive. Augusto, in the Santos film, pays for his earlier arrogance as tyrant and chief stud of a village by being broken and branded at the behest of the *padron* he opposes (a scene so juicily

[1] Since writing this article I have seen Glauber Rocha's *Antonio-das-Mortes,* which shared the Director's Prize and received the *Prix International des Critiques Cinema et Television,* at Cannes, 1969. I would describe the direction, the editing and the acting as alike villainously incompetent and the film as a whole unflaggingly loathsome.

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prolonged that I vowed to rub vinegar into my wounds when I got home); after a desperate struggle he attains quietude and a species of Christian resignation. But the old Adam—or the old Augusto—erupts with outraged pride, prompting him to join a band of outlaws, thereby invoking an end more appropriate to his temper; for he dies gloriously, in defense of a boy the bandits have picked as hostage and marked out for killing in a church. I was left with the impression of a lesser work by Verdi, cross-fertilized by a Samurai legend!

The Priest and the Girl (1966). Direction and manuscript by Joaquim Pedro de Andrade. Ninety minutes running time, which seemed like one hundred and fifty and recalled Carl Theodore Dreyer at his most heedless, mistaking the interminable for the leisurely. Or Robert Bresson at *his* worst, he who loves God more than montage. Yet *moments* come alive: violent, sensual, inventive. I think you've been here before. Anatole France and Ambrose Bierce, among oh-so-many others, have told the tale. A young priest arrives in a primitive community to replace a priest who has died; he is tempted by a girl who so decisively scatters his forces that he readily believes she is an emissary of the Devil. There is a certain ambiguity never, thank Heaven, dispelled, in the nature of the girl's sexual relationship with the dead priest (when he was alive, I mean!), with her elderly guardian and with a creepy storekeeper. However committed her relationships may have been, she is passionately certain she has not been "loved." Predictably she inflames the newcomer who "rescues" her from the village, believing his intentions are chaste. But in flight across the wasteland he succumbs to her beauty, loathes himself thereafter like Paphnutius, rushes back to the village and the church he has betrayed, she following, where he has to fight off the indignant villagers and again flee, with his forbidden and ever-ripening fruit clinging to him like a lovely leech. They take shelter in a cave and here the film ends, ancient women from the village trying to burn them out—or are they exorcising them?

I don't know. Is it *kitsch* or is it not? The situation gathers a lot of conviction for itself, after its pedestrian opening scenes, chiefly because Paulo Jose is utterly believable as the mulish, harassed priest and Helena Ignez is the most persuasive rebuke to celibacy I've seen for nigh twenty years, palpably bewitching, with her young amplitude, heavy eyelids, earthy hands and long Raphaelesque neck. (I am dedicating my next bull to her.) There is one particularly impressive piece of cinema, probably suggested by *Woman in the Dunes,* when she sits stark maddeningly naked in the desert. The camera frames her face and shoulders, *primo piano,* tendrils of corn-silk hair blowing into the lens. After which, a curve of shoulder and naked back—pure draughtsmanship. The priest, in profile, kisses her arm; past reason haunted he drops to his feast; the camera remains, above it all, just focusing the melody of her face. Beautifully done: nothing Swedish here.

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B. H. HAGGIN

Music and Ballet Chronicle

INTEREST IN THE BEETHOVEN *Eroica* that a Japanese conductor and orchestra would produce led me to the concert of the NHK Symphony of Tokyo under Hiroyuki Iwaki in Carnegie Hall, where I heard the most excitingly effective performance of the work since Toscanini's. In fact the two introductory chords followed by the *Allegro con brio* statement of the opening theme established immediately in startling fashion what continued to be evident thereafter—that this was the performance of a man who must have listened to the Toscanini performances of the *Eroica* on records and have been convinced of the rightness of the conception of the work they embodied. Moreover it was the performance of a man who operated as a musician in this work very much as Toscanini did—with similar subtle modifications of a steadily maintained tempo, similar continuity and cohesive tension in the shaping of the sound moving in time—and operated as a conductor with a similar control of a superb orchestra sensitized to his direction. But having said all this I must emphasize that the performance was not a copy of Toscanini's: there was more than the faster tempo of the *Marcia Funebre* to make it unmistakably Iwaki's working out in sound of what he had come to feel himself as the right conception of the work. And the extraordinary powers it revealed were as impressively evident in the performances he conducted of other works: Mayuzumi's score for Balanchine's *Bugaku,* Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto with Yoshio Unno as soloist, and two unfamiliar encores presumably by Japanese composers.

Another such experience was provided by the Carnegie Hall concert of the Royal Philharmonic under Rudolf Kempe. A fast-paced performance of Strauss's *Don Juan* demonstrated the brilliance of sound and execution the orchestra had acquired under his direction; then a performance of Mozart's Piano Concerto K.271 offered a sensitively phrased orchestral context for shapeless and otherwise mediocre playing by Evelyne Crochet, who I would guess was the management's, not Kempe's, choice for soloist. And finally a performance of Mahler's Symphony No. 1 left one overwhelmed by the operation of conductor with music and orchestra—the evident contact of Kempe's mind with everything happening in the score and with the player or players who produced it in sound—and by the statement of the work this operation achieved.

The Carnegie Hall management made another poor choice for the first concert of its series *The Art of the Lied*: the tenor Ernst Häfliger, who had little left of his once beautiful voice, and who gave

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a demonstration of skillful manipulation of that little without disaster, rather than of art in the delivery of Schubert's songs (you wouldn't have known this from the tributes to Häfliger's voice in the press, including Schonberg's in *The Times*). But I hadn't come to hear Häfliger; I had come to hear the man "at the piano," Franz Rupp, whom Irving Kolodin thought he was complimenting by describing him as "the world's equivalent to Gerald Moore prior to Gerald Moore." Moore has managed to get the press and public to accept his estimate of himself as the uniquely great accompanist of all time; but it isn't true. One can hear on records Coenraad Bos's marvelous playing with Elena Gerhardt,[1] and Rupp's with Schlusnus, Kreisler and Feuermann;[2] and I wrote once about Rupp as an ensemble pianist what is not true of Moore: that the context Rupp created for the singing or playing of these others—exciting as playing of the piano and as playing of the music—revealed gifts of the magnitude of theirs and placed him among the greats of the musical world. And now again at Carnegie Hall it was the playing Rupp did with Häfliger that alone gave musical interest and distinction to the occasion.

At the concerts of Peter Pears and Benjamin Britten in Hunter College Playhouse also it was Britten's unusual playing of the piano parts of Schumann's *Dichterliebe* and Schubert's *Die Winterreise* that made the performances the arresting and fascinating ones they were—though what remained of Pears's once beautiful tenor voice was agreeable to the ear, free of its quaver of recent years, and skillfully deployed in sensitively inflected phrases. What was unusual in Britten's playing was what he found to point up and make meaningful that one hadn't ever been made aware of before. And if it produced a better result in *Dichterliebe* than in *Die Winterreise* this was because in *Die Winterreise* the pointing up was so intensified as to produce occasional distortion of shape and excessive vehemence. One result was the disappointment of my hope for a performance of *Der Leiermann* that would avoid what seems to me an error of most singers in this concluding song. That is, the frozen, numbed despair of the song seems to me to dictate the numbed manner in which it should be sung and played; and I find confirmation of this in Schubert's markings: the *pp* at the beginning is not modified at all in the vocal part; in the piano part it changes to *f* only after the last vocal phrase, and before this sets limits on the few dynamic stresses and expansions marked in the text. But most of the singers I have heard have sung the song with expressive warmth; all, except Hans Hotter, have made the last vocal phrase an impassioned outburst; and not only was Britten's playing too vehement, but Pears, before his final outburst, sang the phrases in a mannered staccato that was obtrusively unsuited to their expressive character.

[1] *Songs of Hugo Wolf.* Rococo 5202.
[2] *The Art of Emanuel Feuermann.* RCA Victrola VIC-1476.

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On the other hand, at Marilyn Horne's Carnegie Hall recital one heard the most beautiful female voice of today, and a use of it which constituted some of the greatest singing of today. The extraordinary range of the voice, from the high notes of a soprano to the low ones of a contralto (which Horne sometimes, mistakenly, makes into approximations of a baritone's); the absolute technical control of it evident in the sustained phrases of melodic writing, the astoundingly accurate fast coloratura passages; the musical intelligence that governs the use of it—these produced superb performances of the pieces by Purcell, arias by Handel and Rossini, and songs by Schubert, Debussy and Strauss on the program.

At a later concert of the New Jersey Symphony conducted by her husband, Henry Lewis, in the same hall, Horne first contributed beautiful and affecting singing of sustained melody to a performance of Act 2 of Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice;* then grandly phrased singing of the fine cavatina *"Non temer"* from Rossini's *The Siege of Corinth,* breathtakingly accurate singing of the coloratura passages that followed, and similar singing of the inferior aria *"E fia ver, mio Signor."* The program offered also a new work for orchestra by Donald Erb, *The Seventh Trumpet,* a succession of dissonant and noisy instrumental sounds which communicated nothing and had no internal coherence in themselves and merely demonstrated what I suspected was the reason for its inclusion on the program—that Lewis could get the orchestra through an extremely difficult contemporary piece. In the other music the orchestra played with precision and good sound that was insufficiently solid down below (perhaps because it included only seven basses); but Lewis's pacing and shaping of the act of *Orfeo,* from the very first clarion-like calls of the orchestra, lacked the force I could recall in other performances; and in the Rossini pieces he kept the orchestra accurately in time with Horne's singing, but did not keep its volume from outbalancing hers occasionally. The Euridice, Joanne Bruno, was poorly matched with Horne in vocal quality and musical style; but Abraham Kaplan's Camerata Singers performed well.

Another great singer, Beverly Sills, made the New York City Opera's new production of *Lucia di Lammermoor* last fall a notable event. Her voice, as I have said before, no longer has its earlier loveliness, and is a little tremulous and edged; but it is still agreeable to the ear, and is deployed with a musical style, and in coloratura passages with a technically secure bravura, that produced a remarkable vocal performance in *Lucia*—one, moreover, that embodied the expressiveness of a dramatic performance more powerful than one usually sees in this opera. And I take nothing away from her achievement when I question one detail: her directing certain florid passages in the Mad Scene at Enrico (if I remember correctly) in the manner of accusations or denunciations, which they are not. I suspect this to be

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an innovation of Tito Capobianco, whose staging was another of those in which the directors of today feel privileged to recreate the composer's work in ways they consider necessary for understanding of what, actually, audiences have understood for a hundred years, and understand today, without any such help. Thus, audiences have known from their librettos what happens in the first two scenes of *Lucia* in the park of Ravenswood Castle: in the first Normanno's reporting to Enrico the surreptitious visits of Edgardo to Lucia; in the second Lucia's entrance with Alisa for the meeting Edgardo has requested. But Capobianco has the conversation of Normanno and Enrico take place in what the program describes as a courtyard of the castle but what looks like a basement storeroom, and introduces four mysterious gray-robed silent characters, one of whom receives from Edgardo, who appears for a moment in a doorway on the left, a letter which is then handed to Lucia, who appears for a moment in a doorway on the right. The letter presumably is the request for the meeting in the park, which Capobianco thinks it necessary, as Donizetti did not, for the audience to see actually being delivered. And an audience today should see what Donizetti wanted it to see, not what someone else thinks he should have wanted.

Of the other major roles, Edgardo was sung with no musical finesse by the tenor Michele Molese, Enrico and Raimondo more beautifully by Dominic Cossa and Robert Hale; and the singing was done in a bland orchestral context provided by Charles Wilson's conducting. Aside from the opening scene Marsha Louis Eck's sets were well designed; and so were Jose Varona's costumes.

The young pianist Michael Rogers, who astounded me at his debut several years ago with the matured mastery exhibited in his performance of Schumann's Fantasy Op. 17, gave me an opportunity, at his recital in Carnegie Hall, to hear the performance again and find that it was as extraordinary, and the matured mastery it exhibited was as astounding, as I had thought. The same mastery produced distinguished performances of Mozart's Sonata K. 330 and Beethoven's infrequently played but very engaging small-scale Sonata Op. 78, and was wasted on the pointlessly ugly Bartók Sonata.

The Guarneri Quartet began the first concert of its Beethoven series at the Metropolitan Museum of Art with the Quartet Op. 127; and the unusually robust delivery of the *maestoso* opening chords each time they were heard was one manifestation of an apparent desire to impart bigness to the music that resulted in occasional excessive vehemence—another being the exaggeratedly impassioned playing of the cello's *cantabile* melody in Variation 4 of the slow movement; and another the distention and emphasis of the passage in the finale beginning at bar 73 (and its later recurrence). The distention and overemphasis were heard also in the cello's plucked statements in the second movement of Op. 59 No. 3, but not in Op.

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18 No. 2, which was treated, delightfully, as one of Beethoven's early small-scale utterances. It was surprising, therefore, at a later concert, to hear Op. 18 Nos. 1 and 4 treated as large-scale utterances—one result being dryness and even occasional stridency in the forced sound. But the group's normal beautiful sound was heard in the superb performance of Op. 131 that followed—not only in the quiet opening fugue and other quiet sections of the work, but even in the powerful finale.

Like its inaugural concert, the two subscription concerts of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center that I attended suffered from the participation of its eager-beaver-like director, Charles Wadsworth, whose St. Vitus dance at the piano was a visual concomitant of the obtrusive playing that wrecked the balance of the three instruments in the performance of Mozart's Trio K. 498 for clarinet, viola and piano with Gervase de Peyer and Walter Trampler, at the first concert, and dominated over the winds in Poulenc's Sextet at the second. It was when he was off the stage that one heard excellent ensemble performances: at the first concert Beethoven's rarely played but outstandingly fine Quintet Op. 29 for strings, performed by the violinists Yoko Matsuda and Charles Treger, the violists Boris Kroyt and Trampler, and the cellist Leslie Parnas; at the second Boccherini's Quintet Op. 17 No. 1, an unfamiliar work characteristically individual in its musical thinking, performed by the violinists Pia Carmirelli and Hiroko Yajima, Trampler, Parnas and the cellist Fortunato Arico, and Beethoven's String Trio Op. 9 No. 1, performed by Carmirelli, Trampler and Parnas. The first program was completed by the world premiere of a piece commissioned by the Society, Colgrass's *New People*, a setting of the composer's own poems, for mezzo-soprano, viola and piano, which I found not to be worth the work expended on it by Shirley Verrett, Trampler and Wadsworth and the attention of the audience; and songs of Granados and Nin. And the second offered five uninteresting Schumann duets sung by the soprano Veronica Tyler and tenor Anastasios Vrenios. The works of Mozart, Beethoven and Boccherini made these two of the better programs achieved by Wadsworth's idiosyncratic way of combining the familiar and the unfamiliar, which was to add to the few well-known masterpieces—Mozart's String Quintet K. 516 and Clarinet Quintet, Beethoven's Cello Sonata Op. 102 No. 2 and Schubert's Quartet *Death and the Maiden*—not some of the many other masterpieces that the concert-going public rarely hears—the many quartets of Haydn, the other string quintets of Mozart, the many quartets and quintets of Boccherini, the Quartets Opp. 29 and 161 and Octet of Schubert—but instead "rarely heard compositions requiring unusual combinations of instruments and voices," on the questionable assumption that any and all such compositions were worth performing and listening to. This produced the very first program, with Mozart's Clarinet Quintet as the one major work, and the rest a Pergolesi

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trio sonata, three folk song arrangements by Beethoven for mezzo-soprano, violin, cello and piano, Saint-Saëns's Caprice on Danish and Russian Airs for flute, oboe, clarinet and piano, and the new Colgrass piece. And it produced a number of others which also looked more interesting to the eye than they were likely to sound to the ear—some without even one major work by a major composer to balance the unfamiliar minor or inconsequential pieces.

Not for the first time, what Eliot Feld's American Ballet Company, the Harkness Ballet and the American Ballet Theater presented on the stage of the Brooklyn Academy of Music, in Festival of Dance 69-70, had no resemblance to the interesting things reported in Clive Barnes's reviews. In *Meadowlark,* to music of Haydn, Feld's fluent inventiveness in ballet idiom operated uninterestingly; in *Intermezzo,* to piano pieces by Brahms, it produced attempts at solemn meaningfulness for the three or four Intermezzi at the beginning that were as unsuccessful as those of the music, but effective and attractive dances for the Waltzes Op. 39 that followed; in *Cortège Burlesque* it contrived moderately amusing dance jokes to go with the fun that Chabrier's music poked at Wagner. But *Pagan Spring,* to Bartók's Dance Suite, was a *Sacre du Printemps* in laboriously contrived and ugly modern-dance movements executed by groups and soloists whose comings and goings made no coherent sense. As for works of other choreographers, the movements of the two boys in Herbert Ross's *The Maids,* to music of Milhaud, were incapable of conveying the ideational complexities of Genet's play; and in and for themselves, however effective at moments, they were without motivation. And Fokine's *Carnaval,* staged by Yurek Lazowski, could have succeeded only with the imaginative set and costumes, and the mature dancers with powers of presence and projection, that the production didn't offer.

The Harkness Ballet's new works were *La Favorita,* in which an ineffective succession of snippets of Donizetti's music were set to an ineffective succession of snippets of ballet numbers contrived by Benjamin Harkavy; and *L'Absence,* in which the operation of Robert Mitchell's background construction was more interesting than Milko Sparemblek's interminable succession of movements, to meaningless sounds by Ivo Malec, concerned with "a woman who sits alone . . . unable and unwilling to hear the voices of others, a prisoner of her memories." And the American Ballet Theater offered two ineptly made and ineffective new works: Dennis Nahat's *Brahms Quintet,* to the String Quintet Op. 111, in which it was painful to see what Mimi Paul's gifts were wasted on, after what Balanchine had made for them; and Michael Smuin's *The Eternal Idol,* a *pas de deux* suggested by a Rodin sculpture, to the slow movement of Chopin's Concerto No. 2.

The New York City Ballet's first new work was John Clifford's

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Reveries, to the first, third, fourth and sixth movements of Tchaikovsky's Suite No. 1. The first had Anthony Blum waving his arms gracefully in the manner of Robbins's *Dances at a Gathering,* in a context of movements by girls of the *corps* like those in Balanchine's *Serenade;* the third offered an attractive *pas de deux* for Joanna Kirkland and Conrad Ludlow, in a context provided by several girls; the fourth a solo, in another such context, which employed delightfully the pure, clearly defined and lovely classical style of the astoundingly young Gelsey Kirkland; the sixth a number for all the dancers that I found ineffective.

As it happened, Clifford, as a dancer, provided confirmation of the point I made in my last chronicle. In the absence of Villella he danced in *Rubies;* and though in his own quick, sharp style he is a brilliantly effective dancer—for example in the Valse Fantaisie of *Glinkiana,* and *Candy Canes* in *The Nutcracker*—his performance in that style in *Rubies* didn't achieve anything approximating the effectiveness of Villella's performance in *his* style, the one for which the movements had been invented. In *Emeralds* too Suki Schorer's dancing, though lovely, didn't have the pointed-up style of Mimi Paul's that Kay Mazzo had managed to reproduce; but Robert Weiss was an excellent replacement for John Prinz in the *pas de trois.*

Gelsey Kirkland's classical style was exhibited more impressively in her Sugar Plum Fairy in *The Nutcracker,* which held its own, as something unemphatically but completely achieved, with Villella's powerful Cavalier. In this performance Marnee Morris' Dewdrop had the required fluid grace that Karol von Aroldingen's—in another performance with Verdy's enchanting Sugar Plum Fairy—lacked completely. But von Aroldingen operated more successfully in the concluding Ricercare of *Episodes.* Gelsey Kirkland's quiet, clear movements were beautifully right in the unspectacular *Monumentum pro Gesualdo;* and in the spectacularly perverse *Movements* that followed, Mazzo was as effective as she had been in the Concerto Op. 24 of *Episodes.*

The collection of Paul Rosenfeld's music criticism put together by Herbert A. Leibowitz[3] reached me last summer when I was going through a collection of W. J. Turner's reviews from 1915 to 1945 that a young reader had had photo-copied from the volumes of *The New Statesman* and *The Spectator* in the Dartmouth College Library. And as it happened I was reading Turner's review, in November 1922, of Rosenfeld's *Musical Portraits,* in which he quoted passages from the chapter on Stravinsky that Mr. Leibowitz also quotes from in his introduction. One of these was the statement "The new steel organs of man have begotten their music in *Le Sacre du Printemps.*

[3] MUSICAL IMPRESSIONS: SELECTIONS FROM PAUL ROSENFELD'S CRITICISM, edited by *Herbert A. Leibowitz.* Hill and Wang. $7.95.

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For with Stravinsky, the rhythms of machinery enter musical life"; another was part of one quoted by Mr. Leibowitz:

> . . . There come to be great, weighty, metallic masses, molten piles and sheets of steel and iron, shining adamantine bulks. Contours are become grim, severe, angular. Melodies are sharp, rigid, asymmetrical. Chords are uncouth, square clusters of notes, stout and solid as the pillars that support roofs, heavy as the thuds of triphammers. Above all, there is rhythm, rhythm rectangular and sheer and emphatic, rhythm that lunges and beats and reiterates and dances with all the steely perfect tirelessness of the machine . . .

Mr. Leibowitz quotes this to demonstrate that Rosenfeld's analogies and metaphors define the composer's work accurately for the reader and listener; but to Turner it showed Rosenfeld to be a critic who could "make you forget all about the composer or the composition which is nominally his subject" and who "was as sufficient in himself as any music-hall turn that holds the audience's attention." Turner could see no connection between Stravinsky and machinery, though he noted "a certain pounding monotony of rhythm in [*Le Sacre*] which might remind one of an electric power station if that rhythm could be isolated from the general character of the work." And my comment is that to listen to the strongly rhythmed sections of *Le Sacre* is first, to be struck by the extreme irregularity of the rhythms, in contrast with the regularity of the pounding rhythm of machinery: the exciting irregularity, for example, of the spacing of the *sforzato* chords of the horns over the regularly reiterated string chords, right at the beginning (No. 13) of *Augurs of Spring: Dances of the Adolescents*. Also it is to realize that the rhythms are not, cannot, be heard isolated from the rest of what is to be heard: even in the simple passage I have mentioned one hears them as the rhythms of those chords, whose pitches and timbres make them musical substance with musical significance and effect. And as the piece continues one hears them with complicating additions to this simple musical substance—an *ostinato* of the english horn over arpeggios of the bassoons; melodic fragments from the flutes, the trumpets; at three bars before No. 17 the flutes' first anticipation of the melody of the bassoons at 19; at 25 a melody of the horn answered by the flute; at 5 bars after 28 the sustained melody and harmony of the trumpets, marked *cantabile*—and one hears the working of all these into a progression of complex musical texture excitingly activated by the irregular rhythms that realizes Stravinsky's aural image of a pagan ritual dance. Similarly, the somber string chords reiterating a slow, heavy one-bar rhythm at No. 59—the thuds of triphammers for Rosenfeld—are heard to be the bass of a slow dance in *Spring Rounds* whose woodwind melody alternates with the sustained *cantabile* melody that was heard at 5 bars after 28, played now by wood-

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winds and horns, and, at 53, suddenly declaimed with hair-raising effect by the full orchestra.

To the testimony of what one hears there is now added the testimony of what one can see in the recently published facsimile of the sketch book with Stravinsky's day-by-day work on *Le Sacre,* beginning with the first jottings of musical ideas—melodies, chord progressions, rhythms—over which are written words referring to sections of the work: that the operation is one by a musical craftsman fashioning with musical materials a musical object that will evoke for the listener, with powerful impact, the situations and actions of the pagan ritual Stravinsky's musical imagination is concerned with. It is with this musical operation, and the musical object it produces, that a critic must deal; but Rosenfeld doesn't deal with the actual strongly rhythmed writing in parts of Stravinsky's work; instead he abstracts from it the mere concept "strong rhythm," which he elaborates in a free verbal fantasia into metaphors completely unrelated to the realities of that actual writing in *Le Sacre* and what it is intended to convey to the listener. These metaphors about molten piles and sheets of steel and rectangular, steely rhythms of machinery that Rosenfeld substitutes in the mind of a reader for the actual musical substance and rhythms of pagan ritual dances in *Le Sacre* constitute, then, not a defining of the work but a misrepresenting of it, and as such a disservice to the reader as well as Stravinsky. Moreover, the strongly rhythmed writing which the metaphors are concerned with is only part of *Le Sacre*; and to write about *Le Sacre* solely in terms of the metaphors is to misrepresent a work which has another important part—the marvelously evocative quiet writing in the second scene that doesn't lend itself to metaphors about machinery. (Not that Rosenfeld doesn't attempt to make them apply: "The weird orchestral introduction to the second scene has all the oppressive silence of machines immobile at night.")

Mr. Leibowitz also claims for Rosenfeld an understanding of the fact that an artist's work "is a portrait of his innermost being," and of the additional fact that "an ecological balance between the composer and his culture exists that can easily be tampered with, to the detriment of his art"—an understanding which he says enabled Rosenfeld to find the explanation of the "crippled power" of Mahler's symphonies in the inner conflict of a baptized and assimilated Jew who had "denied the racial heritage planted deep in his consciousness." I can find no such statement in Rosenfeld's essay, *The Tragedy of Gustav Mahler;* but I don't share Mr. Leibowitz's confidence in the value or even the correctness of what Rosenfeld does say about Mahler's failure and its causes in the essay, which I find to be another of his constructions of words and ideas with no relation to the realities of what it professes to deal with. I mean that to know the ranting in some of Mahler's later symphonies is that of a twisted,

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tormented man is to know an interesting fact; but knowing this fact, and what made him twisted and tormented, changes nothing in one's experience of the ranting. As for the correctness of what Rosenfeld says, he explains Mahler's failure by the egoism which he says made Mahler incapable of love, and by the fact that he was one of those who, because they derive no satisfaction from living life itself, look for satisfaction in the attainment of an ambitious external goal. Moreover, to be born a Jew in anti-Semitic Austria was not "conducive to the sustainment of that fresh faith in life, that relaxed love of men, from which great song springs," but on the contrary induced fearful withdrawal into self; and the musical world of his time, with its lack of spiritual values, suggested no nobler courses of action than the one he had adopted. The goal he chose to give him satisfaction was the writing of "great" music—music with the philosophical weight and grandeur of Beethoven's and Wagner's; but "being sterile, he supposed that their ability to love, to create, had come to them through a power over musical means." Thus it was the attempt "to achieve greatness through enormity of means," to achieve with mere prodigious technique the music he was not spiritually endowed to achieve, that resulted in the failures in the "hulking haggard symphonies and songs."

I can give here only these essentials of what Rosenfeld elaborates at great length with his verbal and metaphorical luxuriance. And my own first response is to wonder what evidence he could have had, fifty years ago, for what he professed to know about Mahler's personal life. But someone else who has read most of the biographical material published in the last twenty years, and who happens in addition to know something about the documentary material long withheld by Mahler's widow but made available after her death to the author of a forthcoming book on Mahler, tells me Rosenfeld's statements have no basis in fact whatsoever, and that the actual personal tensions which affected Mahler's life and work were the result of bad family situations in early childhood, emotional difficulties with his wife, the death of a daughter, and, most of all, intellectual convictions. And I find it probable that these convictions, rather than the motivations Rosenfeld ascribes to Mahler, were responsible for the aim expressed in the famous statement "For me, 'symphony' signifies using all the means of available technique to construct a world for myself," and for the realization of that aim in the gigantic musical structures employing huge instrumental and vocal forces.

As for these structures, the realities about them are that they include both successes and failures; and a critic must recognize these realities—must recognize certainly the ranting of gigantic orchestras in the later symphonies, but also a manipulation of those orchestras in other works that resembles Berlioz's in its fastidious, precise and original employment of now only these few instruments and now only

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those few in textures as clear as they are complex—and this as part of an operation which is never perfunctory or mechanical, in which everything that happens testifies to the attention, thought and purpose of a mind always working, and working in individual, fascinating ways that hold interest even in the long-winded writing of the attractively genial Fourth Symphony, the sublime finale of the Third. Rosenfeld does not recognize these realities; and what he describes in the failures that are all he reports—among other things "the banal, stale note" in the music for the words *"Ich hab' Erquickung Not"* in the second song of *Das Lied von der Erde,* and in the twelfth and thirteenth bars of the "pseudo-Beethovenish" theme of the finale of the Third Symphony; the loss of momentum and other defects of that long finale—are not at all what one hears in these pieces of music. Here—as in the essay on Stravinsky's *Le Sacre* and in other essays in the volume—he shows himself to be a critic who either cannot hear correctly what is actually presented to his ear,[4] or is able to hear instead what the ideas he is developing in his essay require him to hear. Or rather, he is one of the critics who do this: Mr. Leibowitz's acknowledgments begin with one to Albert Goldman for the conversations that taught him about Rosenfeld's esthetics; and this makes it look as if Rosenfeld's operation was the model for the Goldman systematizations of invented ideas about periods, generations, forces, crises, and the invented musical objects that fit into them.

[4] After the New York premieres of the Balanchine-Stravinsky *Apollo* and *Le Baiser de la Fée* in 1937 Rosenfeld wrote: "The choreography of *Apollo* was utterly empty of poetry, effortful, and essentially at variance with the music. If that of *Le Baiser* was less antagonistic to its score, it was largely for the reason that the composition itself is Stravinsky's feeblest"—one that Rosenfeld found to be "an interminable fantasia on themes of Tchaikovsky's." Which is to say that he showed himself to be as deaf to what Stravinsky's marvelous score for *Le Baiser* presented to his ear as he was blind to what the two great Balanchine ballets presented to his eye.

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Reviews

PATRICK CRUTTWELL

Blake, Tradition, and Miss Raine

I AM SURE THAT I AM NOT THE ONLY reader of poetry who finds himself in a state of permanent uncertainty about William Blake, unable either to fit him comfortably in the sequence of great English poets or to exclude him therefrom with an easy conscience. This uncertainty is not due to the eccentricity of his opinions—were those of Shelley or Yeats any less eccentric?—but to the sheer unreadability of his major works. But one could never leave him alone. There was something in him which was always compelling a return. There was a powerfully personal style, a human voice which could be felt as strongly in casual marginalia or scribbled doggerel as in finished works; there were lines, phrases, occasional magnificent paragraphs, here and there even in the dreariest of the prophetic books: these were always reinforcing the conviction of greatness given out so irresistibly from a handful of short poems.

This uncertainty, though not always admitted or realised, has lain behind most orthodox criticism of Blake. The twentieth century, in general, has agreed that he *was* one of the great English poets—some would say, the greatest of the eighteenth century—but has maintained this largely on the basis of an admiration of the short poems, one brief prophetic work (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*), and an assortment of marginalia and notebook scribblings—while dismissing the major prophetic books as utterly impossible and bestowing no more than a brief embarrassed glance on the religious convictions which inspired those books (and also, indeed, almost everything Blake wrote). This, if one thinks of it, is really a trifle absurd. It is like saying that Homer was a great poet because of the Homeric Hymns, though the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are both unreadable, or that although of course Shakespeare's plays are not to be endured, one can't deny the supreme greatness of *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. Yet, critically absurd though it is, it does seem to correspond to the fact, to the genuine experience of most readers of poetry. I myself have never met *anyone* who confessed to have read through, with pleasure and profit, any one of the major prophetic books; and certainly I have never managed it myself.

Yet again (one is always turning round on oneself when thinking of Blake) there is no doubt that Blake is "alive" today, and alive in a certain way which can be claimed for no other poet of the eighteenth

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century. A proportion of this aliveness may be discounted as suspect, as when he is claimed as a patron-saint of the hippies, but what is genuine is a feeling of sympathy in many contemporary poets with Blake's repudiation of all the set literary forms of his time and in particular of the firm metrical framework of the Pope tradition. Blake's long loose line with its un-iambic beat is at the beginning of a line which goes on through Whitman to Ginsberg, and his statement of his own metric, in the preface to *Jerusalem*,[1] is one which, with variants, both Whitman and Ginsberg would agree with. And they would agree also with his basic concept of the poet's stance—as "Orator," bard, prophet, rather than artist or entertainer.

There are in fact two "living Blakes," two versions of him presented by contemporary admirers. One might be called the Proto-Hippy, the prophet of free love, free verse, and freedom from the chains and satanic mills of institutions secular and religious alike, a patron-saint of anarchism. The other sees him as a much more ordinary, rational, and comprehensible sort of rebel, as a reasonably orthodox Radical of the 1790's vintage, one whose contemporary incarnation would do his stint on the steps of the Pentagon and in the columns of the *New York Review of Books* but would be otherwise an accepting and acceptable member of the community. The former, one might say, is the Blake of Ginsberg, the latter of Erdman's *Prophet Against Empire*.

Miss Kathleen Raine will have nothing to do with either. *Her* Blake bears not the smallest resemblance either to Allen Ginsberg or to Robert Lowell. Her monumental work,[2] the outcome of many years of research and meditation, presents a Blake who, in the deepest sense, is not a rebel at all (though the society he lived in forced him to become one superficially), but is thoroughly orthodox: no breaker away from tradition but far more traditional than those who called him rebel. The tradition in which he worked, Miss Raine argues, was "the central tradition of European poetic and pictorial symbolism"; the fact that this tradition appears now to be "underground," cranky, obscure, means simply that people have forgotten it. Its main sources were the mystical writings of Swedenborg, Boehme, and others, the doctrines of Neo-Platonism, and something, perhaps, of Hinduism (the Vedas). This may seem to most of us an eclectic mish-mash, an incoherent magpie's hoard; but Miss Raine insists that it made up a single and coherent tradition. In her own words:

Traditional metaphysics is neither vague, personal, nor arbitrary.

[1] "When this Verse was first dictated to me, I consider'd a Monotonous Cadence, like that used by Milton & Shakespeare & all writers of English Blank Verse, derived from the modern bondage of Rhyming, to be a necessary and indispensible part of Verse. But I soon found that in the mouth of a true Orator such monotony was not only awkward, but as much a bondage as rhyme itself. I therefore have produced a variety in every line, both of cadences & number of syllables."

[2] BLAKE AND TRADITION, by *Kathleen Raine*. Princeton University Press (Bollingen Series XXXV-II). 2 volumes, $22.50.

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> It is the recorded history of imaginative thought and has, in every civilization, an accompanying language of symbol and myth in which such knowledge is preserved and transmitted: the royal language of poetry and the other arts . . . a structure able to express metaphysical meaning in symbolic terms both coherent and beautiful. . . .

Its essence is the method of symbolism and the doctrine of correspondencies. "Natural forms and appearances of all kinds are the outward manifestation of a spiritual life and energy. . . . The whole natural world corresponds to the spiritual world." The "Little Girl Lost" and "Found" poems, for example, "are based upon the mysteries of Eleusis; their actors are the emblematic figures on the Portland vase. . . . They are Blake's version of the myth of Persephone and Demeter."

Miss Raine insists that Blake was a didactic poet, a prophet; one must not ignore his subject-matter because poetry such as his "is not meant simply to stimulate the emotions; it summons to an understanding." Blake, that is, held seriously a doctrine which he passionately believed in, and regarded his poetry as the vehicle for conveying it. He held, too, the traditional belief in poetry "as the supreme expression of knowledge."

What, then, was this doctrine? It was the radical opposite of the scientific materialism which began, for Europe, in the seventeenth century and has been for at least two centuries the prevailing philosophy of the West. This philosophy Miss Raine regards as (literally) satanic.

> Blake implicitly compares the prevailing philosophy of Europe—which makes of maya a veil of stifling and "black" materialism—with the philosophy of Vedanta . . . Blake might have seen the same looms weaving much the same cloth to this day . . . Blake was in reality a defender of tradition in a non-traditional society. . . . To Blake the worst tyranny of all is that false system of thought he identifies as satanic: natural religion, mechanistic philosophy. . . . To suggest that Blake could ever have been a supporter of Marxist materialism or any of the other forms of materialism that are all but world-wide today is either foolish or dishonest.

Of these "materialisms" the cardinal error is to see reality as that which can be measured, counted, understood and controlled by the methods of science and reason. "Science creates a universe of compelling beauty, although it is in truth but Satan's Pandemonium, built in outer darkness outside mind. . . . Before their fall into the inflexible Cartesian mode, Time and Space were flexible, imaginative." The spirit of science or abstract reason Blake personifies as Urizen, an anxious, unhappy tyrant, frozen, weeping, doomed forever to "bound or limit." But the true reality is not that which science and reason understand; it is that which is apprehended only by the

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imagination. "The imagination has innate knowledge." And from this it follows that the true art cannot be that which is called "realistic," a slavish imitator of reason's "reality."

> Art, according to this philosophy, is not a mirror held up to nature. . . . Human nature, on the contrary, should follow art and discover itself through art. . . . Only so can spectral man rise above the level of animality and barbarism to which, left to "nature" and naturalistic art, he tends to revert. . . . Poetry, according to Blake's view (which is that of tradition), is not a mere passive reflection but an agent in the evolution of consciousness.

Such is the essence of Miss Raine's argument. On the way she demolishes all the contemporary views of Blake. She destroys the Proto-hippy like this:

> Blake, praised by Swinburne for his supposed advocacy of "evil," and dear to the twenties as a spiritual first cousin of D. H. Lawrence, gave sex a very modest place in the order of things. . . . It is important to insist upon the humble place that Blake assigns to sexuality and to "love"; for the freedom he claimed for the soul was not based, like the depraved carnality of the present times, upon the importunities of "bodily lust." . . . Blake's sexual doctrine proves after all to be more akin to traditional orthodoxy than it is to the ethics of the modern profane world.

As for the Proto-Marxist, she remarks that "to pretend, as some left-wing writers do, that Blake opposed the industrial revolution only because it had put many craftsmen out of work is impossible in the light of the reasons he himself states." The Proto-pacifist receives similar dismissal:

> Blake was neither for war nor against it; he understood what it was: the last resource of the energies of life. . . . Thus, while we cannot say that Blake favored war, we can certainly say that he was on the side of life; and there are times when life manifests its power as war. . . . A pacifist he was not.

And by implication, throughout her work, Miss Raine is destroying the academic view that Blake's major works, and the beliefs that inform all his works, can be simply ignored: for, she observes, "the profane 'learning' of academic critics" is of no use in understanding Blake. Such critics "are ignorant of the order of reality that Blake is at all times attempting to communicate."

It seems to *this* academic critic (who admits the truth of that last remark) that Miss Raine makes out her case: the case, that is, that Blake's works represent a serious effort to embody through poetic symbolism a reasonably coherent philosophical tradition. In a sense, Miss Raine's work is a detailed refutation of the proposition advanced in T. S. Eliot's very influential essay on Blake in *The Sacred Wood,* to

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the effect that Blake's philosophy was something "homemade," which Blake had constructed from bits and pieces "lying about the house." Miss Raine argues—and to my mind proves—that it was nothing of the sort, that it was "neither vague, personal, nor arbitrary," but on the contrary was a system established and formulated long before Blake came along. But to prove this, of course, doesn't in itself make any *critical* difference; doesn't, that is, make it more likely that the prophetic books will ever emerge from their limbo into the accepted canon of English poetry, for the most accurate theoretical demonstration that the content of a work of art is more intellectually respectable, more coherent, than had been realised, doesn't in the least make it more convincing as an imaginative work. Miss Raine makes two literary comparisons which strike me as illuminating in ways she may not have intended. She compares the *Book of Thel* with the opening chapters of Johnson's *Rasselas,* and some aspects of its imagery with Macpherson's *Ossian.* The comparisons seem to me valid; but what they demonstrate is, first, the inferiority of Blake's turgid verse to Johnson's tensely controlled prose, and, second, how much of Macpherson's diffuse woolliness is to be found in Blake. On the latter point, Miss Raine attempts to argue that Macpherson's imagery is "descriptive merely of natural appearances," whereas Blake "uses the same images as vehicles of imaginative thought"; but this, though it may be true, establishes only the superiority of Blake's intention. It does nothing to prove the superiority of his creation.

Miss Raine's work involves one in some interesting and difficult critical questions. What, for example, do we really mean by a "tradition"? What do we mean when we say that such and such a writer works in such and such a tradition? Miss Raine, as we have seen, claims that Blake did work in a tradition and that this was "the central tradition of European poetic and pictorial symbolism." But she admits also that this tradition has been virtually lost and forgotten by the West for some two hundred years, and some examples of it that she herself quotes are sufficient proof of how very thoroughly it has been lost by even the most highly educated. (Miss Raine says, indeed, that the most highly educated are precisely those who have most thoroughly lost it.) Now I would suggest that as soon as a tradition is lost—that is, as soon as it is no longer consciously possessed by the generality of educated men and unconsciously, in some way, by the uneducated—it has ceased to be a tradition which is alive in the sense that makes it usable by artists. And once lost, it is irrecoverable, as a live thing: it has become an object of the historical past, which may be studied, comprehended, admired and regretted, by devoted scholars like Miss Raine, but which can never be resurrected. A tradition, then, to be effective for artists, must be the possession of the community; once it is possessed only by a handful of exceptional persons, it is no longer effective.

Of course it was not Blake's fault, nor is it Miss Raine's, that this

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"central tradition" has been lost; but it has happened—Miss Raine herself agrees that it has—and that sad fact leads to the next question. How much does it matter if a poem relies on a content and terms of reference which have become so esoteric as to have little or no emotional value or intellectual meaning except to fellow-adepts? While I was thinking of this, I happened to turn up that number of THE HUDSON REVIEW[3] which printed Pound's eighty-fifth Canto, and I remembered the questions which I asked myself then, when I looked at those pages which consist almost entirely of Chinese ideograms reader supposed to *do* with those pages? Make what seem to be the together with their phonetic equivalents. What, I wondered, is the appropriate noises—say *ping* and *pong, wang* and *pou,* as instructed by the Master? Or contemplate the ideograms merely as pleasing meaningless shapes? Or spend several years of his life learning Chinese? Porphyry's Cave of the Nymphs, Cornelius Agrippa's alchemical mysticism, Swedenborg, Boehme, *et al.,* are about as remote as Chinese from the average reader: the same sort of questions must be asked of works based on them.

On this matter of tradition—I suppose a great deal of contemporary literary thinking about it derives from Eliot's fantastically influential essay on "Tradition and the Individual Talent." In that essay, Eliot was wise enough to limit the concept to terms of reference purely literary; he talked about the desirability of writing as if one had the whole literary succession of Europe "in one's bones." That style of remark was itself "in the tradition": it is like Dryden's recollection of Milton's saying that he, Milton, was the "poetic son" of Spenser, who had said much the same of himself and Chaucer—and Dryden clearly hopes that his reader will add the name of Dryden to the family-tree. Such things reflect the need felt by some writers to regard themselves as standing in a "line," a succession: not by all writers, for there is another sort who feel the exact opposite. One may think of Hopkins' observation that the effect of masterpieces on him was to make him "admire, and do otherwise"—countered in turn by Robert Bridges' phrase, in his preface to Hopkins' poems, about those readers who demand "a continuous literary decorum" and "are grown intolerant of its absence."

As long as the tradition is thus limited to a succession of writers and certain conventions of writing, no great harm is done by invoking it—though one may sometimes wonder how much good. It's when the concept is broadened so as to take in elements religious and philosophical (or political)—but is still applied as a test or relevant factor to imaginative writers—that things become difficult. Eliot himself couldn't keep it purely literary: as a result, presumably, of his conversion, it soon became entangled in his own peculiar amalgam of "anglo-catholic, royalist, and classicist," with unhappy effects, one

[3] Vol. VII, No. 4 (Winter, 1955).

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may think, on his critical thinking if not on his poetry: for a certain clarity and incisiveness were lost for good.

But the tradition in which Miss Raine places Blake was scarcely literary at all. This she herself recognizes; she observes that "there is no literary value in Swedenborg's symbolism," and confesses at another point that "literary considerations are remote—necessarily so, since the sources of Blake's thought are not literary in their purpose, nor was Blake's interest in these ideas of a literary kind." Such concessions, like the remark that one cannot ignore Blake's subject-matter because he was a didactic poet who "summoned to an understanding," are really forcing the reader to abandon the consideration of Blake's prophetic books as works of poetry, of creative imagination, and to consider them instead as philosophical propositions; and thus the reader is forced to ask himself: Can I, or can't I, believe in, agree with, what the man is saying? Miss Raine, herself a devout believer, does not mind being forced to do this, since she can answer with a heartfelt: Yes, I can believe, yes, I do agree. But what if one has to answer with the conclusion that the "perennial philosophy" is an ill-digested corpus of elaborate nonsense? What is then left of the prophetic books? Nothing, I fear, except a few, very few, striking and beautiful fragments and a general impression of enormous waste.

The problem is not the comparatively simple one long ago thrashed out by I. A. Richards and Eliot, concerning the relations between poetry and belief. When poets such as Dante, George Herbert, Hopkins and Eliot himself are involved, the average educated Western reader is in no great difficulty even if he doesn't share, and never has shared, the religious beliefs which lie behind and play a major part in their poetry, because those beliefs have never been lost in any sense, never gone underground, and therefore their power to generate emotional force, their terms of discourse, and their traditional images, have all been absorbed, even by unbelievers, in the mere process of becoming educated in the Western tradition. You "pick them up," even if you've never been inside a Christian church in your life, through the simple reading of such things as the outburst of Isabella in *Measure for Measure,* when she answers Angelo's strict statement of the law with "Why, all the souls that were, were forfeit once, And he that might the vantage best have took Found out the remedy." But this, alas, can scarcely be said of the kind of beliefs and references which inform such a passage as this:

> The expression "Bne Seraphim" (sons of the Seraphim) occurs in the writings of Cornelius Agrippa, who defines the Seraphim as "the Intelligence of Venus," and elsewhere describes Venus as presiding over the processes of vegetation, and the Seraphim as "the fifth order of angels by which God Elohim Gibor (the cabalistic Geburah) . . . draweth forth the elements."

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I don't think it is coincidence that when Blake's poetry does move me, I find either that its symbolism is self-explanatory, as are the chimney-sweep, soldier, and harlot of "London," or that it has been drawn from the common stock of European poetry: for instance, Miss Raine herself points out that in "The Sick Rose" Blake is using the same rose-beauty, cankerworm-vice or death, symbolism, as Shakespeare uses in his sonnets ("for canker-vice the sweetest buds doth love") and in Viola's lines about "concealment, like a worm i' the bud . . ."—and the yearning sunflower in the poem of that name is no less a part of the public domain.[4] The conclusion seems to be that if a system of symbolism and imagery is outside the limits of the reader's previous knowledge and emotional sympathy—if, in fact, the reader has to "learn it up" in order to get the point—then it is virtually useless for the purposes of poetry. This is especially so if (as Miss Raine says is the case with Blake) the poet is insistent that the reader should be not merely "stimulated" but also brought to understand and agree. There are exceptions, in which symbolism whose meaning is not comprehended can be nevertheless effective: but this happens only when, in effect, *another* meaning takes over and the intended one disappears from view, like the steel framework when a building is completed. Yeats's sonnet "Leda and the Swan" is an example of this. Yeats wrote it, as he tells us, to illustrate the mystical doctrine of the cycles of history, according to which an old cycle ends and a new begins with a period of violence, of which the rape of Leda is symbol. But as Yeats worked on the poem, "lady and bird" (in his own words) took possession of it, and the intended meaning became nothing more than an interesting, but unnecessary, footnote.

There is another critical problem which Miss Raine's work raises. What happens when a poet—I use the word in its basic sense, imaginative writer, *maker*—presents himself, or is taken, as a prophet also? We all know that in primitive societies they were, or are, allegedly the same: Latin *vates* means both. I suspect that one has to go very far back, or into societies very primitive indeed, before one can find this fusion complete; even the bard portrayed in the *Odyssey*, who sings before the king's guests at table and is rewarded by Odysseus (for flattering him) with a cut off the best part of the roast, is clearly well advanced on the road to professonal entertainer. (He

[4] Miss Raine points out that the conventional interpretation of "Ah! Sun-flower," which sees it as an expression of sexual desire thwarted and suppressed, is more or less the direct opposite of Blake's real intention. "In the *Sun-flower*, the lovers are longing not so much for one another as, through their love, for some state beyond the power of mortal love to fulfill but toward which their mutual love reaches out. This is the view of love expressed by Plato in the *Phaedrus*. . . . It is in fact a Platonic poem." But the poem remains deeply moving because we know and accept the sunflower as symbol of yearning for something unattainable, and it doesn't much matter for what.

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didn't *know* that Odysseus was in his audience, so we needn't suspect him of commercialism.) But however things may be in truly primitive societies, it has been for many centuries far too late in the day of Western civilization: no poet, no man indeed, can now call himself a prophet without rousing up in himself the demons of posing, self-consciousness, and self-inflation, and in those who watch him the demons of ridicule, doubt and embarrassment, or of starry-eyed adulation, which are the inevitable attendants on any attempt to behave in a manner directly counter to the current of one's society. The classic case, of course, is that of Tolstoy. Whether Tolstoy's conversion actually caused a decline in the quality of his writing is something that can never be proved; but I suppose it will not be denied that even such masterpieces as *Ivan Ilych* and *The Two Pilgrims* are hardly up to the level of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina,* or that the criticism of *King Lear* betrays a mind fiercely bent on destroying certain areas of its own responsiveness. He did this in the hope of achieving some specific religious and political results, which he had come to believe were more important than whatever he had achieved, or might achieve, through "mere" literature. These religious and political results he did achieve up to a point, I suppose: his criticism played some part in weakening the Tsarist regime, though the regime which took its place is about as un-Tolstoyan a system as one can imagine. He exercised some influence on Gandhi, who in turn exercised very considerable influence on India—though, again, one has to make the same comment about the regime which has succeeded the one that was overthrown. (American readers may be interested to know that Gandhi's head is now to be seen on a British postage stamp. I await, though with small hope, the appearance of Ho Chi Minh's head on an American stamp.) Yet I can't help suspecting that, in ways not susceptible to proof or analysis, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* have in truth been more influential—that is, have brought about greater changes in the development of humanity—than everything which Tolstoy wrote and did in the cause of his doctrines. And of Blake I would say the same.

But even if one doesn't agree with this judgment, it remains true that an intractable critical problem has to be coped with when a poet is also a prophet. The problem is that one must then maintain, simultaneously, two different scales of value, which are quite distinct and may often be contradictory: the scale of artistic success (for the poet) and that of truth (for the prophet). It would be agreeable to believe that these two are never in conflict, but in fact this is quite unbelievable except by giving the most special of meanings to "beauty" or "truth" or both. This, however, the prophets will not allow us to do. They insist on taking Keats's equation with absolute literalness; they proclaim the complete irrelevance of "aesthetic" criteria—or rather, they maintain that such criteria are identical with those of the

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truth. Blake, as Miss Raine tells us, interpreted the Last Judgment as "an overwhelming of Bad Art," and was able to do this because art for him included "imaginative actions as well as poems, paintings, buildings, and other embodiments of imaginative ideas." Similarly, religion and poetry were, for him, the same thing. "It may seem strange that Blake's Christianity is so closely bound up with his view of poetry, but it is not strange when we have understood that to him poetry means the utterance not of the poet but of the Divine Humanity himself." This may sound impressive in theory, and when paraphrased by an admiring disciple; it does not seem so impressive when one looks at the shrill intolerance and ludicrous bad taste which it so often inspired in Blake's own practice. For instance:

> Sacred Truth has pronounced that Greece & Rome, as Babylon and Egypt, so far from being parents of Arts & Sciences as they pretend, were destroyers of all Art. Homer, Virgil & Ovid confirm this opinion and make us reverence The Word of God, the only light of antiquity that remains unperverted by War . . .

There sounds in that the authentic note of the puritan iconoclast, the man who during the Commonwealth had done enormous damage to the churches of England and had come within measurable distance of suppressing the English universities, on the ground that they taught the cultures of paganism.[5] If you admire Blake (as I do) very sincerely but, as it were, humanly, you find such utterances—and Blake has many more of them—merely comic. You can find them endearingly comic, since they point up that side of Blake which makes him an outstanding specimen of the English Eccentric (a happy breed of men). But they can be found comic at all only because one knows that they were futile: no one paid any attention, and quite right too. If, however, you take Blake as a prophet, and a prophet of the only true religion, you are inhibited from taking any of his sayings as comic. Prophecy and comedy are enemies irreconcilable, and Blake was right to see the "mocks" of Gibbon and Voltaire[6] as the deadliest dangers to "his Lord." In his Pantheon, and in Miss Raine's, there is no place for the mockers. If they come in, he (and Miss Raine) go out. I would like to have them all: but if I *have* to choose, I choose the mockers.

[5] Compare another of Blake's marginalia: "I look upon this as a Most Malignant & Artful attack upon the Kingdom of Jesus By the Classical Learned, thro' the Instrumentality of Dr. Thornton. The Greek & Roman Classics is the Antichrist. I say Is & not Are as most expressive & correct too."

[6] Gibbon arose with a lash of steel,
And Voltaire with a wracking wheel . . .
Titus! Constantine! Charlemaine!
O Voltaire! Rousseau! Gibbon! Vain
Your Grecian Mocks & Roman Sword
Against this image of his Lord!

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ROBERT GARIS

Anti-Literary Biography

IN THE INTRODUCTION TO *The Treacherous Years: 1895-1901*,[1] the fourth and penultimate volume of his biography of James, Leon Edel justifies his method:

> Perhaps I should add a word about my biographical method, since it seems to have puzzled some of my critics, chiefly those in the academic world. I have accepted the axiom of modern psychology that there is sequence and consistency in the stuff of man's imagination; that an artist's work is less accidental than it has seemed; and that even as form and discipline represent conscious effort on the part of an artist, there exists an equally consistent unconscious effort—an inescapable use of the buried materials of life and experience—to which the artist constantly returns. Biography has for too long occupied itself with the irrelevancies of daily life and overlooked the essential keys to character and personality: I refer to the ways in which an artist fashions the myth by which he lives. The physical habits of the creative personality, his "sex life" or his bowel movements, belong to the "functioning" being and do not reliably distinguish him from his fellow-humans. What is characteristic is emotional life and the way in which the emotions dictate—other elements and mysterious forces aiding—the exercises of the demonstrative and symbol-making imagination. "Poetry," said Thoreau in a moment of great insight, "is a piece of very private history, which unostentatiously lets us into the secret of a man's life." It is the quest for this secret that I regard as the justifiable aim of literary biography. All the rest is gossip and anecdotage.

Actually this does help. What has puzzled me all along has been how Edel squares his biographical methods with his conscience as a literary critic, so it clarifies matters to know that he hasn't any interest in being a literary critic, that his only interest is in questing for the secret of James's private life. Why then—a new puzzle has arisen—does he spend so many pages manifesting his inability to read literature and to deal adequately with James's intellectual and artistic development, if he isn't interested in these matters and doesn't regard them as part of the justifiable aim of the literary biographer? The apologia helps you with this one too, since it shows at a glance that intellectual strength and consistency aren't important to Edel either. For the astonishing assertion that questing for the artist's secret is the only justifiable aim of literary biography remains just that, just an assertion; Edel's "word" about his method

[1] THE TREACHEROUS YEARS: 1895-1901, by *Leon Edel*. Lippincott. $10.00.

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remains just a word; yet the air, the tone, the shape of this prose tells you that Edel thinks he is really making a case, really arguing a point. So there ought then be no surprise at the failure of the biography as a whole to demonstrate the validity or the relevance or the plain usefulness of what Edel merely asserts to be the secret of James's life.

The secret of the treacherous years is, as the adjective suggests, rather thrilling. Public humiliation on the night of the *Guy Domville* premiere, Edel asserts, led to a "kind of 'nervous breakdown'" from which James recovered by performing "self-therapy" in the usual form of a return to memories of childhood. The breakdown happened because James's attempt to write for the theatre figured, in his unconscious, as a move toward full masculine assertiveness, a bold step beyond the role of quiet observer that had hitherto been his identity, and his defense. The *Guy Domville* disaster temporarily destroyed that identity because it seemed to confirm the childhood phobias about masculine activity. It is true, of course, that James's immediate response to the failure was a return to the art of fiction with renewed devotion; it is true that he soon came to believe the failure a blessing in disguise, since it had led him to understand how the novel might be "dramatized." And here is how Edel handles these complications:

> Two forces contended within: his intellect and his emotions. His intellect was as powerful and as active as ever; indeed it now began to discover all kinds of solutions—artistic solutions. His emotions were blocked, defended, confused, full of past and recent hurt. At this moment therefore James begins to use the supremacy of his intellect. He concerns himself more intimately with "method" than ever before. Rational form and mind were thus interposed against the chaos of feeling. If he allowed himself to feel too much he would have to surrender to his despair, face imperious questions about his identity, his goals, the struggle to *be*. His best, his "safest" identity was the artist; there he was in full possession. This explains why at this moment James conceived the idea of moving the architectonics of the theatre into his De Vere Gardens study. For the first time he began to elaborate scenarios for his novels. He had hitherto written them only for his plays.
>
> Below the surface of his intellectual inquiry—or strategy—the spiritual wound remained, deep and raw. We thus arrive at a great human paradox involving the mystical forces of human survival. At this moment of defeat Henry James seized the skills of his "technique" as if they were a life-belt, and indulged in a vigorous and mature inquiry into forms he had not hitherto questioned. Simultaneously we have an emotional retreat—that retreat of which man is capable in order to nurse and heal his spiritual as well as physical wounds. One part of James remained in his study, vigor-

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> ously engaged in artistic inquiry, while the other took to its sickbed. The Catholic "retreat" symbolizes this in religious experience; the biological process illustrates it in the physical world; and we know how the evolutionary process, confronted with obstacles, invents subterfuges, alterations, mutations. Or, in James's own image, within the dim water-world of his inner being fancy and dream took over in the service of his wounded ego—even while the active novelist continued, in the world, to use his artistic tools with greater skill than ever. In the materials of James's writing, and the forms he gave them, we can discern the life-in-death, health-in-sickness struggle. There was both progress and regression. His mind moved forward—his feelings returned to childhood hurts. Instinctively reaching for insights into his dilemma, James recovered old buried memories. The technical progress is palpable; we can study the form of his work. The regression is available to us largely in the fabric of the novels and tales written between 1895 and 1900.

Very exciting stuff; but when you ask whether what Edel is saying is true, you discover that it's hard to make out just what he is saying. This is apparently the kind of " 'nervous breakdown' " that James suffered, and the question is how seriously and in what sense Edel is using the word. "Breakdown" of whatever kind implies a failure to "function," but where is that failure in Edel's account? If James's intellect was in his study while his emotional part was on its sickbed, does that mean that there ceased to be any communication between the two parts? The answer isn't clear. If James was using his intellectual inquiry as a "strategy" to keep himself from "feeling too much," that should mean that he was *repressing* his feelings; but Edel's word is "retreat"—is a distinction being made? When feelings are repressed—or even when they "retreat" from the knowledge of the intellect—some "symptoms" ought to appear, for, in the theory that underlies Edel's whole hypothesis, feelings that aren't being "faced" are bound to show up somewhere, and to show up in *distorted* form. This passage doesn't make it clear whether or not there were any symptoms, and the argument on this question elsewhere in the volume is confused, uncertain and inadequate.

On the question of what symptoms appeared in James's life during this period, Edel reports that James was more frequently depressed during these years than heretofore, that he felt the passing of youth more intensely, that his rate of work fell much below the spectacular par he had reached in the '80's; and these facts are given weight in Edel's characteristically melodramatic journalese: "What had happened to the author who could, with his turning hand, produce tale after tale, sometimes one or two a week? We may surmise that at this stage, given his mood and his despair, he resisted writing altogether." This is not in the least a serious question, for we know exactly what had happened, and so did James. He had—as he saw it—turned

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to the theatre because his fiction in the late '80's had been badly received; and the subsequent public failure in the theatre only too heavily re-underlined the fact that he was out of touch with the big public. What he then tried to do was to get down to work at fiction again, knowing that his work wouldn't reach or please the audience he deserved; and the difficulty of doing this seems to me a perfectly adequate explanation for the depression and the relatively slow rate of work. Nothing in his mood necessitates hypothesizing a "deep and raw" wound *below* the level of consciousness, particularly since James during this period spoke and wrote repeatedly about his depression and about its cause—his sense of having been rejected by the public. It is true that he now spoke of that public far more insultingly than he had before, but this release from infatuation with theatrical things surely represents a strength rather than a weakness, a positive insight, not merely (though it may have been that too) a sour-grapes "strategy" of claiming that he hadn't wanted the success he had worked so hard for. Likewise, his continual sense of resentment, sometimes strong and serious, sometimes comic, at the financial and critical success of some of his colleagues both in England and France also strikes me as exhibiting a "normal" ambivalence, far from that of "breakdown"; and the comedy of tales like "The Next Time" or "The Real Thing" seems to me to represent full insight into and mastery over that ambivalence. In sum, James both felt and expressed his strong emotions about what had happened to him in the theatre; those emotions are adequate causes for the depressions and the slow rate of work which James was consciously distressed by; he did finally master the depression and, when the chance of buying Lamb House made it necessary, he did again write fiction at a remarkable rate—and since all of this is so obviously true in the account even as Edel writes it up, there is nothing then in James's life during this period to justify the word "breakdown." And nothing is more indicative of Edel's intellectual methods and habits than the fact that he plays on both sides in this argument. First he takes his case that James's life during this period was very seriously disturbed as far as he can; then, when it is becoming rather embarrassingly obvious that this line of argument will show that breakdown didn't in fact occur, though it might well have occurred, he switches silently—another word would be "dishonestly"—to the more exciting idea that, after all, James's was the "kind of 'nervous breakdown' " that doesn't really show up in the behavior of the man. It was an unconscious breakdown—certainly the kind to have if you have your choice—and the "real" (a favorite word) evidence for breakdown and self-therapy and the whole hypothesis lies not in the life but in the art, in the "fabric" of James's fiction. Yet Edel deals with the fiction as inconsistently and as self-servingly as he dealt with the life. And oddly self-defeatingly too, for Edel looks everywhere but in the right place. Sometimes he finds the "deep and

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raw" wound right on the surface of the fiction: whenever a character experiences terror or hurt bewilderment, this is in the most naive way read as James's real feeling. But when this line of argument proves impossible, then the lack of the required emotions on the surface of the fiction, in the experience of a character, becomes an even more telling and exciting argument that James is really feeling them unconsciously. Meanwhile the kind of evidence that would be available to a literary critic is of course unavailable to Edel. When there does seem something decidedly "wrong" with the fiction, some disproportion between fact and feeling, for instance, which might reasonably be taken as a sign of some disturbance in the artist's "functioning," Edel is not only unable to deal with this evidence but in fact quite uninterested in it. At such times he seems genuinely hostile to literary criticism.

One of the branches of the hypothesis that I skipped before, an unusually interesting one, concerns James's move to Lamb House. The acquisition of Lamb House was both a retreat and a courageous adventure: on the surface in his conscious mind, James was withdrawing from the commotion and squalor, physical, moral, and social, of the London world in which he had suffered the theatrical humiliation; deep down, however, the acquisition of Lamb House represented courageous re-entry into "the house of Family" where he had in early childhood suffered the traumas that were reactivated on the night of *Guy Domville*. In Edel's view, James entered this house in feminine disguise, but he eventually succeeded in facing the traumas, and in laying their ghosts and then was able to cast the disguise aside and establish himself as the adult male master of the house, capable of understanding adult love relations. Edel's main evidence for this hypothesis is that the first story James wrote after the decision to move to Lamb House was "The Turn of the Screw." In response to what ought to have been a prospect of peaceful security, James wrote a nightmare ghost story that registered the unconscious terror he was "really" experiencing. Now the common-sense explanation of this discrepancy—which is only a discrepancy to a very naive mind anyway—would point not only to the fact that James had heard and recorded in his notebook the basic anecdote of this tale some two and a half years before the decision to rent Lamb House, but to the far more important fact that this thriller was very much the sort of thing that James could work up in a hurry in order to get the money necessary for the new venture—which is to say that it did not in fact tie in at all with *any* deep feelings, much less those of childhood trauma. And my reading of the story supports this common-sense explanation, for I have never been able to find depth of feeling in it. Edel's reading of the tale is a rather blurred version of the familiar "deep" interpretation in which the ghosts are the products of the governess's hysterical imagination. The story, then, represents in a distorted form James's own fears upon entering the house of Family.

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The distortion works complicatedly. James both is not and is the governess: since the governess imagined the ghosts and was herself the "devil" who killed Miles, James is telling himself that the ghosts aren't real, that his fears of the terrible consequences of masculine activity are really hysterical; in this reading James identifies with Miles, whose relationship with Quint and with the boys at school was innocently active masculine comradeship. But James also is the governess, because though her *specific* fears are imaginary, there is something terrible to be feared in the house of Family, where masculine activity will in fact lead to death. Now Edel of course doesn't even begin to think that he ought to demonstrate the validity of this reading. Demonstration would involve him in close inspection of James's language, and perhaps the most serious failure of the whole biography is Edel's consistent lack of interest in James's language, and in particular the complex, often highly confusing, relation between the language of his art and the language of his social and intellecutal life.) But the validity of Edel's reading of "The Turn of the Screw" is less important than the way he uses it as evidence for his case. For with this tale Edel argues that James's emotional life, though it had retreated to its sickbed, is nevertheless emerging *directly* into the surface texture of the tale. Here then, apparently, is a colossal symptom. But at the same time he speaks of the work as a masterpiece, a word which would, to me, suggest that in this tale James's 'intellect' and 'technical mastery' had temporarily clarified and objectified the feelings of the "sick" part. But it never occurs to Edel to wonder whether or not this is true.

A more sophisticated reader than Edel might find special interest in the notorious ambiguity of this story: here might well be a sign that strange things are going on below the surface of James's awareness. And this would be true even if one didn't read the story in the widely accepted Freudian way. But Edel, in another deliberate rejection of literary criticism, has nothing to say on this score; his quest for the secret doesn't collaborate with other kinds of interest, but deliberately supplants them. The same thing happens with *The Spoils of Poynton,* which is the first extended work that James produced after the theatrical disaster and therefore a work in which one might expect to find some strong evidence for Edel's case that the disaster had produced deep disturbances in James's emotional life. And since this *is* true, since there actually is some very interesting evidence here, Edel refuses to see it. He reminds us that critics have been puzzled by Fleda Vetch's "ill-motivated renunciation of Owen" and stops there—no wondering about the relation of this to his hypothesis. But the imbalances of *The Spoils of Poynton,* and in particular James's failure to give a satisfactory prelude to his final, and very satisfactorily strong and secure, criticism of Fleda's moral hysteria, may quite reasonably, I think, be interpreted as signs of lack of integration within the artist. Fleda's strained ingenuities to get

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nothing for herself often seem phobic; her sophistical defense of Owen's honor might well be called a "strategy" for keeping from conscious knowledge the unconscious fear that in reaching for Owen, whom she wants and in fact *has,* she will suffer unnameable disasters. And the occasional lack of poise in the novel's very often excitingly successful ambiguity about Mrs. Gereth's wilfulness seems to me also to betray some inner uncertainty on James's part. This novel, then, seems to me full of symptoms, but not of breakdown; the symptoms show up disconcertingly because Mrs. Gereth's splendid tirades against Fleda, and Fleda's extremely intelligent ambiguities about Mrs. Gereth, are such "vigorous inquiries" not into technical artistic problems but into exactly the issues of how to *live.* But Edel ignores all this in favor of worrying an old and easy puzzle: "the Fleda of his preface, the 'superior' girl with the 'demonic' mind and 'free spirit,' is not in the book. In the book she is as confused and filled with tergiversation as James had been in the theatre." James's preface has its puzzles but what he means by Fleda's "free spirit" isn't one of them; James explicitly defines her as wanting to be free from aggressiveness, from possessiveness; nor does his word "free" have the naively enthusiastic implications Edel has in mind, as witness the full quotation: "the free spirit, always much tormented, and by no means always triumphant, is heroic, ironic, pathetic or whatever, and, as exemplified in the record of Fleda Vetch, for instance, 'successful,' only through having remained free." All this is beside Edel's point, of course. Therefore beyond his comprehension, since it is beyond his interest. Interest suddenly revives when Mrs. Gereth describes her feelings, after having sent back the furniture, as those of an amputee: at the sound of this word Edel is immediately on the trail, and we hear plenty about James's father's amputation and the fire and James's own wound and so on. Edel doesn't of course bother to relate this in any sense or degree to the logic of *The Spoils of Poynton;* but this isn't the only indication that he is relying on old note-cards rather than on the actual re-reading of the text.

Edel's grasp on the text of *What Maisie Knew* isn't much more secure, but it is understandable that he has a lot more pointed things to say about this book in connection with his hypothesis: an abstract of this novel's "fabric" does indeed look like the real stuff at last. But even a disbeliever like myself could distort *What Maisie Knew* more convincingly than Edel. I would point out first that the anecdote itself first appeared, and then reappeared, in James's notebooks as a comic pattern seen from outside and above, with the accent on the criss-cross relations between Maisie's four parents and the irony that it is the innocent child who initiates and facilitates the intrigue between the two step-parents. I would show, next, that while James kept the tone of ironic comedy implicit in the earlier conception, his unconscious (masked as an interest in brilliant "technical experiment") gradually propelled him to see the situation from the perspective of

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the little girl, thus achieving that "sick" separation of intellect and emotion which enables the unconscious to express its "deep and raw" wound *unconsciously* in the purely formal element of point of view while the consciousness tinkers happily with contrivances of supreme intellect. While James's conscious mind, experimenting with full dramatization, sincerely believes that the story must be told from the point of view of the little girl, this decision happens mysteriously and paradoxically to be deeply satisfying to the unconscious James on his sickbed, who really wants to and has to become a little girl (temporarily) in his underground self-therapy.

The trouble with Edel's account of *What Maisie Knew* is that he both agrees and disagrees with the above obviously wrong account without seeming to realize his inconsistency, and that his confusions about the meaning and the feeling of the novel never make contact with what the novel really is.

> Like the works of this period it illustrates to an extraordinary degree the way in which the adult mind and professional skill can create a work in the face of an inner bewilderment. Maisie's bewilderment is James's—it is the bewilderment he had felt since the collapse of his world in *Guy Domville:* but it is recreated into a comic vision of benign childish curiosity. Nevertheless, if one looks away from the smooth surface and the intellectual power of the story, one perceives a world of horror: a down-at-heel shoddy middle-class world that treats its children cruelly, and lives in a state of perpetual sexual confusion. In the depths of this novel—which on the surface is very much like a French bedroom farce translated into an English environment—we can discern James's own confusion before the collapsing late-Victorian moral facade. The worldly bachelor of Kensington and Mayfair, in this work, still possessed a fund of innocence and wonder and bewilderment disguised for the moment in the garments of ironic comedy.

The strange word "benign" must be a denial of words like "malignant" or "pathological" and therefore must imply that Maisie's feelings are not neurotic feelings, and this is true. But as the word occurs in Edel's phrase "benign childish curiosity" this meaning is confused, since "curiosity" seems intended to contradict "bewilderment": bewilderment is painful, but curiosity isn't. So Maisie isn't feeling anything. Yet the phrase "Maisie's bewilderment" says not only that she *is* in pain but that it's James's kind of pain. Well, which is it then? But this is the kind of question Edel can't imagine being asked. He is just pushing words around. "Recreated" in standard critical usage, is a positive word describing a process in which what is changed has been deeply understood by the imagination; but the negative word "disguise, "some lines down, absolutely denies this implication. You find the same foolish inconsistency in "comic vision" versus "the garments of ironic comedy." And here is a real treasure-trove from

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the introduction: "By offering us the inner history of his little Maisie or of his young governess, James was in reality redreaming and using for art the essential materials of his own childhood; and in turn, using art as a form of catharsis for the lingering wounds within his psyche." It would be a waste of time to press any of the key-words here for an exact meaning. Not that there isn't an awful kind of consistency in this writing, since "a form of catharsis" does seem to be the right medicine for a "kind of 'nervous breakdown.'" It's this sort of thing that keeps Edel going, and keeps him feeling pretty careful and delicate, until it's time for another thrilled tribute to some "great human paradox involving the mystical forces of human survival." Why a "human" paradox, incidentally—but what's the use?

I'm neglecting the help I got from Edel's apologia. If you read what he has to say about *What Maisie Knew* in the proper spirit—not worrying too much about what the words mean—the general purport is clear enough, though completely false to the novel. Edel's *Maisie* is a "bright and brilliant" professional contrivance for "disguising," "recreating"—in any event "hiding"—feelings of impotence, bewilderment, confusion, utter lack of mastery. James's *Maisie* puts the heroine's painful feelings (which are not in the least like James's supposed sick feelings) right on the surface; she faces them with great courage and insight; her comic ignorance of her parents' sexual impulses and their various outrages against conventional sexual morality never diminishes her sensitive and just understanding of the quality of their concern for her; and it is her capacity to love and her profound understanding of her various parents' incapacity to love that leads to her only fear, the Socratic courage which is the knowledge of what is rightly to be feared. This novel could have been written only by an artist whose intellect and emotions were in an unusually fruitful interconnection. Maisie's poignant feelings both of loving and being loved and of being rejected are rendered with a fullness, depth and exactitude in which I can discern no telltale disproportion between situation and emotion; and the almost unbelievably successful conjunction of the novel's depth of feeling with its dazzling play of sophisticated wit isn't conceivably the work of an artist out of touch with himself in any significant sense or degree. Edel sees none of this; and since he completely fails to understand the source of the novel's, and Maisie's, and James's strength, he is driven to grotesque lengths in imagining the weaknesses he needs to support his case. James's "own confusion before the collapsing late-Victorian moral façade" is a pure, and absurd, invention of Edel's: this kind of confusion has nothing whatsoever to do with the childhood "bewilderment" of which James might be unconscious, nor is there any evidence, within the art or without, on its surface or in its depth, that James felt any such thing. And Maisie doesn't feel it, either, though Edel must be implying that she does. The ample proof of Maisie's lack of confusion lies in her 'renunciation' of Sir

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Claude, perhaps the "healthiest" renunciation in James. Maisie loves Sir Claude, and welcomes with the most poignant joyousness his love for her; she also recognizes his incapacity for loyalty in love; her renunciation is motivated not by neurotic fear of risk but by a sound instinct for self-preservation, and I use the word in reference to emotional, moral and biological well-being. Sir Claude's deeply, painfully confused moral nature might well be confusing to an innocent mind; but Maisie, though deeply and painfully saddened by Sir Claude's confusion, experiences none herself.

Edel's eagerness to look beneath the surface or to "look away from the surface" (how do you *do* that?) is a natural consequence of his incapacity to see what is on the surface, and here I am speaking of simple incapacity to get the facts straight. Edel identifies Sir Claude, for instance, as "the 'masher' of the novel." As for the "down-at-heel shoddy middle-class world" that Edel perceives by this queer trick of looking away from the surface, even he might have stopped short of such nonsense if he had made any headway with what the surface explicitly tells him, as for instance in this description of the Faranges, which incidentally isn't seen from Maisie's perspective:

> Like her husband she carried clothes, carried them as a train carries passengers: People had been known to compare their taste and dispute about the accommodation they gave these articles, though inclining on the whole to the commendation of Ida as less overcrowded, especially with jewellery and flowers. Beale Farange had natural decorations, a kind of costume in his vast fair beard, burnished like a gold breastplate, and in the eternal glitter of his teeth that his long moustache had been trained not to hide and that gave him, in every possible situation, the look of the joy of life.

For these extraordinary types, neither "down-at-heel" nor "shoddy" nor "middle-class" are quite the *mots justes.*

Since Edel's account of all the other tales and novels of the period is similarly out of touch with the actualities of James's writing, it is clear that his case depends entirely on one hard fact—the preponderance of feminine protagonists in the work of this period. The other recurrent themes—innocence betrayed, ignorance trying desperately and sadly to figure out the world from its limited perspective—these are familiar Jamesian themes not only before but after this period, which is to say that they can serve as evidence neither for breakdown nor for cure through self-therapy. But I am perfectly willing to agree that the 1895-1900 array of little girls and young women and frightened governesses might be the sign of *something* odd happening in James's unconscious. I am willing to believe the opposite too. An alternate hypothesis would run, very briefly, thus: the choice of Fleda Vetch as center of consciousness in *The Spoils of Poynton* is perfectly characteristic of James—consider *The Portrait of a Lady*

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earlier and *The Wings of the Dove* later—and therefore deserves no special remark. *What Maisie Knew,* in its title and its general method, announces itself as a display-piece of the new dramatization and of James's confidence in it and in himself; the choice of the little girl herself as the center, then, is an even more audacious sign of confidence; and the fact that the book is a masterpiece shows that the confidence was justified. A very much more ordinary exercise in dramatic strategy might have been responsible for the choice of the governess as center in "The Turn of the Screw"—granted the subject, the governess as narrator rather obviously follows; furthermore, only by distinctly reminding oneself that the governess is a woman do we, I think, come to feel any resonant relation with the much more deliberately and delicately conceived femininity of Maisie. "In the Cage," on the other hand, reminds one in superficial aspects so *much* of Maisie as to suggest the right analysis: this over-rated tale is a rather mechanical encore in the Maisie mode. Nanda is in the first place only one of the centers in *The Awkward Age;* she has Maisie's courage and security of emotional judgment without Maisie's ignorance of sex: consequently she is rather formidably *un*-feminine, *in*-vulnerable and *over*-active from Van's point of view; if she is actually deeply vulnerable it is because of her love for Van, who can't face her lovingly candid understanding of his nature and of his behavior, but that theme is hard to fit into the logic of Edel's hypothesis, and he makes no attempt to do so. The narrator of *The Sacred Fount* is masculine, of course, and yet that hardly means what Edel suggests, that James has assumed a "healthier" identity; for this novel and this narrator, far from representing James's new ability to face and understand adult sexual relations, seems to me to represent by far the most hysterical fear of the consequences of such relations to be found in James. Edel's argument focuses on May Server, but why he should find the narrator's hypersensitive respect for May Server's vulnerability a marvelous sign that James has recovered I can't fathom. Nor do I find the three novels of the "major phase" significantly more adult in their handling of adult sexual relations than *What Maisie Knew* or *The Awkward Age.*

Yet I am not thoroughly convinced by my alternate hypothesis, for I would tend to agree with Edel that "an artist's work is less accidental" than I have made James's recurrence to a feminine point of view or persona in the work of this period seem. I am very much open to argument on this question, but Edel's biography is a waste of time just because it contains no such argument. Worse: the strange prestige his incapacity to argue the case has nevertheless won him may discourage better minds from trying.

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GUY DAVENPORT

C'est Magnifique Mais Ce N'est Pas Daguerre[1]

A NOVEL PUBLISHED A HUNDRED YEARS after *L'Education sentimentale* will not display gaucheries and ineptitudes of the most obvious primitiveness without good reason. Either the author is casting off art in a puritanical return to simplicity and nakedness, or some stylistic mode of improbable effectiveness has caught the novelist's eye, some startling transposition clean outside fashion, as when Carl Orff dispensed with an orchestra and scored his *Trionfo di Afrodite* for voice, drum, and castanets, or Picasso at seventy decided to draw for awhile like a child of ten.

One has not read far into Joyce Carol Oates' *them* before be begins to think of *Maggie, A Girl of the Streets,* the Studs Lonigan trilogy, *Jennie Gerhardt,* even *Germinie Lacerteux*. That is, we are reading about desperate poverty in industrial slums. The cockroach walks across the dinner plate, the cop on the beat is bribed by the madam. Papa in his grey undershirt swills beer at the kitchen table. Big brother has somehow come by a revolver. Poland still clings to Grandma as tenaciously as smoke and grease to the kitchen wall above the oil stove. What is more, the author assures us that we are reading a true story told her by one to whom it happened.

The Goncourts, we know, questioned the scullery maid minutely in order to write *Germinie;* they also went and looked, made notes, tried to imagine what it was all like, inventing in their enterprize both the naturalistic novel and, as they had occasion to complain, Émile Zola. Farrell and Dreiser knew without research what they were talking about. *Maggie* was written in a fraternity house by a brash stripling who had never seen the streets Maggie trod, inspired, we are told in the handbooks, by *Madame Bovary,* but surely was more under the spell of Lafcadio Hearn's *Chita,* published just two years before.

One of the men who struggled heroically with contemporary writing and what he saw as its deficiencies was Charles Olson. Some re-

[1] THEM, by *Joyce Carol Oates*. Vanguard. $6.95. THE BAMBOO BED, by *William Eastlake*. Simon & Schuster. $6.50. COSMOS, by *Witold Gombrowicz*. Grove. $5. THE UNSUBSTANTIAL CASTLE, by *Robert Rushmore*. Dodd, Mead. $4.95. THE PARTY AT MRS. PUREFOY'S, by *Ward Dorrance*. Delacorte. $5.95. JUST OVER THE BORDER, by *F. D. Reeve*. Morrow. $5.95. TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA, THE PILL VERSUS THE SPRINGHILL MINE DISASTER and IN WATERMELON SUGAR, by *Richard Brautigan*. Delacorte. $6.95. PRICKSONGS & DESCANTS, by *Robert Coover*. E. P. Dutton. $5.95.

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marks of his in an essay called "Human Universe" would seem to isolate the aesthetic problem created by Miss Oates's *them*. "What makes most acts—of living and of writing—unsatisfactory," he writes, "is that the person and/or the writer satisfy themselves that they can only make a form (what they say or do, or a story, a poem, whatever) by selecting from the full content some face of it, or plane, some part."[2] The work of art, he goes on to explain, becomes a demonstration rather than a fully articulated picture of the world, and belongs to discourse rather than art. I would not go so far as to say with Mr. Olson that a work of art is therefore false.

Miss Oates's novel is in no way false, but it does insist so doggedly on the miserable greyness of life that one begins to see that she is looking at her subject from the outside. She looks with compassion and with understanding, and with a determination to see only bitterness and despair. Did her characters, for instance, never play Chinese checkers, enjoy a radio program, revel in the delight of a cold Coca-Cola, dance frenetically and with abandon, have a good hour looking through the Sears, Roebuck catalogue, or take in a movie? No sociologist would accept these humble pleasures as an alleviation of grinding poverty, but a novelist just might.

It is the purity of tone achieved by Miss Oates that raises the question of naturalism and reality. Does the uniform greyness of Miss Oates's prose reflect or hide her subject? When she has gone to so much trouble to dispense altogether with art, why do we feel that somehow, with a far subtler hand than most novelists, she has enlisted every wile of art? Clearly Miss Oates has wanted to deepen the sincerity of the novel in order to use the form at all, and she must be thoroughly aware of the terrible paradox of the enmity of art and sincerity. The artist achieves his sincerity by embracing his art rather than his subject. We live in an age capable of accommodating the most strenuous sincerity: the novelist can, like Andy Warhol, record reality and transcribe it unedited. Faced with such efficiency in the naturalistic arts, our mind keeps going back to the fact that Defoe did not even interview Alexander Selkirk in order to write *Robinson Crusoe*.

Whatever the aesthetic problem of *them*, it is a novel of heartbreaking power. Its theme is the loss of promise in young lives, and the awful repetition of squalor and misdirection generation after generation. Miss Oates demonstrates that life which has reverted to barbarism within the city is a more terrible barbarism than any outside civilization.

If Miss Oates's novel has the formlessness of a nightmare, Mr. Eastlake's *The Bamboo Bed* is as smartly designed as an Olivetti advertisement. Unfortunately, it is utterly estranged from reality. It purports to be about a battle in Vietnam. It isn't, and couldn't possibly be. If

[2] *Selected Writings*, edited, with an Introduction, by Robert Creeley (New Directions, 1967), p. 55.

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Milton Caniff, the suave delineator of *Steve Canyon,* were to do a novel, this is the novel. As in Mr. Caniff's adventure strip, Mr. Eastlake's characters all talk in kennings, jump about with the elate coolness of Kirk Douglas, and make love in helicopters and in underground bunkers belonging to French rubber magnates. Mr. Eastlake's hero wears a Roman helmet and ruts with a Dragon Lady just after his unit has been wiped out by The Unfriendlies.

In this garishly colored comic-book one can also find flower children wandering about the Mekong Delta (which seems to be derived from Edgar Rice Burroughs' concept of equatorial Africa), two witty military clowns based on Mr. Caniff's Lieutenants Buckett and Fitch, and a rigamarole of other stock comic characters. Such a novel is highly entertaining. If its immediate literary model weren't the comic strip, one could dignify it by talking about the art of O. Henry revived and brought up to date. There is in it enough satire against the war in Vietnam (if anybody's in the mood to be amused) to sustain a certain rakish vitality, but unless one's experience of armies and wars is cockeyed, Mr. Eastlake's novel is tushery from end to end.

Cosmos, by the late, exiled Polish novelist Witold Gombrowicz, the author of *Ferdydurke* and *Pornografia,* is as dreary, dragging, and dull a novel as the human mind is capable of writing. That it won the International Prize for Literature ($20,000) in 1965 makes one wonder if the English translation is very bad, or whether the judges for the award were in their right minds.

My sole acquaintance with modern Polish writing is the novels of Jerzy Kosinski *(The Painted Bird* and *Steps)* in which violence is portrayed with such horror that one hopes that these extreme pictures of inhumanity are an absolute never to be repeated. But Mr. Kosinski is like Goya, he can say, "This I saw with my own eyes," and his writing has the authority of grief and understanding. Mr. Gombrowicz seems to have discarded any such clarity. He goes into the darkness of the soul without a lantern, leaving all as obscure as when he found it.

There is a kind of artist who likes to pluck at one's nerves, who seems to take delight in maliciously whispering the worst about the human soul. Mr. Gombrowicz tells us a story that has no apparent meaning. The details of the story are all unnerving, revolting, and cruel. Art may say anything, may make us know anything; nothing is forbidden its gaze, but for art to remain art, it must offer some reason for its imitation of nature. Mr. Gombrowicz offers a scant and doubtful rationale. A character who is on a futile and idle search for the meaning of a series of grotesque events (a hanged bird, a hanged chicken) remarks this his "plan for the next day made the strange relationship between two mouths, two towns, two stars, more tolerable." Whereupon, for no reason at all, he hangs a cat. And the remainder of the novel is so dim, so infuriatingly flat, slow, and silly that it makes nothing at all more tolerable.

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Is there a kind of masochism afoot in modern aesthetics whereby the leaden and the dull acquire significance simply because the beaten spirit would seem to claim more seriousness than a more robust struggle with the exigencies of things? Certainly Mr. Gombrowicz in choosing to depict the human will poisoned by despair and deflected by abulia has willingly contributed his portion of blackness to the vastation. It is as if Fagin had written *Oliver Twist.*

The Unsubstantial Castle, Robert Rushmore's second novel, is a slight romance in which Roderick Usher meets the All American Boy. This is an unfair description of the matter, but will serve well enough. The story concerns an aesthete who inhabits an Irish castle, raises lilies, collects bibelots, dresses like Liberace, and has a crush on a favorite servant. Into the candle-lit hothouse of this latter-day Des Esseintes arrives his vacationing American nephew, a gangling, charming *naif* in chinos, tennis socks, and coiffure of studied disarray. André Gide himself could not have plotted a more deliciously ambiguous encounter, though nothing Gidean happens, unless we count a wet dream occasioned by the young visitor's admiration of himself in one of his uncle's chocolate-and-strawberry dinner jackets.

The novel is a study of opposite and independent processes. One is the aging and death of the lapidary uncle, whose life is a concatenation of missed opportunities and evaded love affairs. The other is the growing up of the wide-eyed nephew. Many a subtlety is afoot here; one assumes that the healthy young scamp becomes an artist and thus fulfills the uncle's thwarted ambitions. The tone of the novel is engaging enough, and is therefore readable with pleasure, but one wonders if it all isn't an elaborate Aesopian fable about introversion and extraversion. In any case, this is a rare example of the old-fashioned romantic novel, and has the proper weather and tone of its genre.

Ward Dorrance's *The Party at Mrs. Purefoy's* is a minor masterpiece. It belongs to the Southern School, and is close to the work of Eudora Welty in its transparent harmony of Flaubertian surface and myth. The protagonist is a middle-aged southern gentleman on a journey to visit the friend of a gracious and recently deceased lady. The journey is an occasion for many memories and for the assessment of his own life. To arrive at his destination, he has to make his way through a flooded Mississippi (or Styx), and by the time he is there we are aware that he is an Orpheus descending. The dénouement is too startling to disclose; the joy of reading the book is dependent upon the rich surprise of its ending.

This is Mr. Dorrance's first novel; hitherto he has restricted himself to the short story. He is a magnificent prose-stylist; he has a wonderful eye, and a fine ear. More important, he has a compassionate, unfoolable sense of humanity, so that his characters are at once complex and perfectly intelligible. He is a writer wise about human beings, and his understanding has both grace and depth.

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Mr. F. D. Reeve's *Just Over the Border* misses distinction by a hair. It is about an imaginary Russian intellectual who suffered horribly under the Stalin régime, who was rehabilitated under Khrushchev, and who is last seen struggling with the present tyrannical ambiguities of the impenetrable Soviet hysteria. The novel is therefore derived from authentic accounts such as those of Solzhenitsyn, Pasternak, and Shklovsky. Indeed, Mr. Reeve has woven into his novel a fictional account of the sufferings of Osip Mandelstam, the frail poet who was sent to Siberia for writing an epigram about Stalin's moustache (a translation of this notorious and famous poem is given on page 95). Mr. Reeve has had a fair exposure to things Russian: he has taught there on an exchange program, and accompanied Robert Frost on his Russian tour.

For all his care to concoct atmosphere, Mr. Reeve seems to fail precisely because he has chosen to assume a Russian eye. His very casualness in his description diminishes his chances for startling us with the strangeness of Petrograd and Siberia. And his plot is by this time a kind of paradign of the destiny of writers in a totalitarian state. Twenty years ago this would have been a novel of great power and freshness; it is written too late. But it is not a flawed or false novel. To readers innocent of the matter from which it is derived it will have its proper impact. One cannot, however, say that Mr. Reeve is a distinguished novelist or prose writer. He has all the virtues of a novelist and none of the imaginative and eccentric gestures which lift a novel from the ordinary to the memorable. And it seems to me to be a failure of the imagination to have cast Mandelstam as a fictional character. A poet of such brilliance and such awful tragedy deserves to be portrayed as himself.

Mr. Richard Brautigan's *Trout Fishing in America, The Pill versus the Springhill Mine Disaster* and *In Watermelon Sugar* are experimental pieces of quite spirited conception. *The Pill versus the Springhill Mine Disaster* is a book of poems, and therefore exempt from our purview here. The first page of *Trout Fishing in America* is a photograph of the author and his wife dressed as character actors in a cowboy movie. Behind them is a statue of Franklin, and the setting is Washington Square in San Francisco. Mr. Brautigan explains the significance of the photograph:

> Around the base of the statue are four words facing the directions of the world, to the east WELCOME, to the west WELCOME, to the north WELCOME, to the south WELCOME. Just behind the statue are three poplar trees, almost leafless except for the top branches. The statue stands in front of the middle tree. All around the grass is wet from the rains of early February.
>
> In the background is a tall cypress tree, almost dark like a room. Adlai Stevenson spoke under the tree in 1956, before a crowd of 40,000 people.
>
> There is a tall church across the street from the statue with crosses,

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steeples, bells, and a vast door that looks like a huge mousehole, perhaps from a Tom and Jerry cartoon, and written above the door is "Per l'Universo."

Around five o'clock in the afternoon of my cover for *Trout Fishing in America,* people gather in the park across the street from the church and they are hungry.

It's sandwich time for the poor.

But they cannot cross the street until the signal is given. Then they all run across the street to the church and get their sandwiches that are wrapped in newspaper. They go back to the park and unwrap the newspaper and see what their sandwiches are all about.

A friend of mine unwrapped his sandwich one afternoon and looked inside to find just a leaf of spinach. That was all.

Was it Kafka who learned about America by reading the autobiography of Benjamin Franklin . . .

Kafka who said, "I like the Americans because they are healthy and optimistic."

Mr. Brautigan's solicitude for the world he lives in and his impatient grasp of essences continue from their clear emergence in this opening passage all the way through an inspired book. Trout Fishing in America is a person, a place, a quality; anything, in fact, the author surrealistically wants it to be. It functions as a nonsense phrase of great power, and the author's spirited faith that he need never explain it is the happy—and only—ground on which we may approach the book.

Most of what's printed in our time is either spiel or bilge. Mr. Brautigan locates his writing on the barricade which the sane mind maintains against spiel and bilge, and here he cavorts with a divine idiocy, thumbing his nose. But he makes it clear that at his immediate disposal is a fund of common sense he does not hesitate to bring into play. He is a kind of Thoreau who cannot keep a straight face.

His prose is handy with apt similes. "Like astigmatism, I made myself at home." His imagination is magnificiently nimble. His sense of the ridiculous is delirious, a gift from the gods. "The Lysol sits like another guest on the stuffed furniture, reading a copy of the *Chronicle,* the Sports Section. It is the only furniture I have ever seen in my life that looks like baby food."

Mr. Brautigan is not a Surrealist, nor yet a fantasist. I would place him among the philosophers, for his central perception is that the world makes very little sense to a man with a plain mind. He has made his will stubborn against the tinsel and whorish fabric of society. He might even claim that he has described the world with a strong measure of accuracy; Lord knows novelists who sound a lot less peculiar than Mr. Brautigan have tampered with their subjects more than he to achieve such astounding fairy tales as the mysteries of Erle Stanley Gardner.

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In Watermelon Sugar is a more sober and mysterious work than *Trout Fishing in America*. Mr. Brautigan calls it a novel, and it satisfies that designation in a very strange and new way. *Trout Fishing* is a festival, and invites a musical analogy; *In Watermelon Sugar* is myth, and is closer to the poem than the novel. Both these works show Mr. Brautigan to be one of the most gifted innovators in our literature.

Pricksongs & Descants, a book of fictions by the novelist Robert Coover, is also a work of much talented and ingenious innovation. I borrow the word fictions from Borges, for the word story is precisely what Mr. Coover is redefining. He himself would choose Cervantes' *novelas ejemplares*. The inexplicable *donnée* of Cervantes' *Man of Glass* is the same kind of premise we must accept from Mr. Coover's rare imagination.

There has been a resuscitation in the last few years of the surrealistic story of the kind practically every era of literature has found useful. Apuleius, Novalis, Walser, Hawthorne, de Lampedusa—one could define a very distinguished company of writers whose mastery of realistic narrative has crossed the bounds of Horace's plausible and evident world and explored a hyperbolic reality in order to follow the elusive into an imaginary infinity.

Mr. Coover in a dedicatory letter to Cervantes announces his desire to escape the confines of naturalism: "We seem to have moved from an open-ended, anthropocentric, humanistic, naturalistic, even— to the extent that man may be thought of as making his own universe—optimistic starting point, to one that is closed, cosmic, eternal, supernatural (in its soberest sense), and pessimistic. The return to Being has returned us to Design, to microcosmic images of the macrocosm, to the creation of Beauty within the confines of cosmic or human necessity, to the use of the fabulous to probe beyond the phenomenological, beyond appearances, beyond randomly perceived events, beyond mere history."

It takes roughly fifty years for a European idea to repeat itself, organically and natively, in the United States. I've quoted all of Mr. Coover's revelation so that you could watch it arrive neatly where James Joyce was in 1920.[3]

The movement in which Mr. Coover can be located would seem to include John Barth *(Lost in the Funhouse)*, Louis Zukofsky *(Ferdinand)*, Donald Barthelme *(Unspeakable Practices, Unnatural Acts)*, Kenneth Gangemi *(Olt)*, and Richard Brautigan. What these share is

[3] This theory is not as madcap as it seems, and is not merely a matter of noting that Andy Warhol has been restaging Dada or that American movements in the arts need time to accommodate themselves to European directives. One example: Donald Barthelme, one of the most inventive of writers, published in *The New Yorker* (24 May 1969) a story called "At the Tolstoy Museum" in which his ironically postured prose is accompanied by deliciously inappropriate engravings which nevertheless supply the exact tone of incongruity he wanted to create. This device was invented in 1911 by E. V. Lucas and George Morrow in a book called *What a Life*.

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a sense that fiction is not so much reality's mirror as its fluoroscope, and that mimesis can tolerate an almost infinite amount of hyperbole.

Mr. Coover works his way through a dizzying array of experiments in which he disarranges reality (backing up a story and starting over again and again, for instance) in order to shatter clichés of narrative style. He delights in unthinkable outcomes to ordinary activities, showing that the merest nudge of routine out of its normal course can flash the quotidian into a nightmare. Frequently the characters in a single sketch will seem each to belong to different kinds of fiction. Do we not always read with the comfortable assurance that Mr. Micawber isn't ever going to turn up in *The Sun Also Rises,* or Zorba in *The Wings of the Dove*?

Mr. Coover's skills are many, and his sensibilities diverse and startling. But above all his virtues he ought to be praised most for his returning to literature that awe and wonderment which no amount of pessimism or scientific certainty can ever remove from the fact that we are, that we exist, and that we exist in a damned strange way utterly divorced from what reason argues or passion claims, and that we do not know why.

To Our Readers:

The following books by editors of THE HUDSON REVIEW have recently been published. In accordance with our policy, they will not be reviewed in these pages, but are listed here for the interest of our readers:

MARIUS BEWLEY: *Masks and Mirrors.* Atheneum. $10.00. *The English Romantic Poets: An Anthology with Commentary.* Modern Library Giant. Random House. $4.95.

ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS: Introduction to *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* by James Hogg. W. W. Norton. $1.85 (paperback reprint).

JOHN SIMON (ed.): *Fourteen for Now: A Collection of Contemporary Stories.* Harper & Row. $4.95.

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WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

Senses of Reality

MY MOST POIGNANT READING MOMENT of the month came at page 130 in Julian Mitchell's new novel whose hero is, at one point in his life, a fiction-reviewer: "Upstairs and down, the novels poured off the endless conveyor-belt of the publishers' autumn lists, till they threatened to fill the house, like the furniture in an Ionesco play. I quickly came to see what Charles meant about novel reviewers knowing nothing about life; they simply don't have time to do anything but read." An unkind cut? Something to bear in mind? Could life be developing interestingly *out there* even in below zero temperatures? Fortunately or sadly, since the reviewer doesn't have time to do anything but read, most current novels,[1] English and American alike, reassure him by their behavior that whatever he's missing out there wouldn't be of the slightest help in responding to what's between their covers, in here. But then there are occasional quickenings of interest when the eye glances off the page not in the usual ebb and flow of boredom and disgust but in the entertaining of a possibility: is reality like that? should it be more like that? how can we bear it if that's the way it is? A few such moments distinguish Julian Mitchell's attempt to chart the undiscovered country in himself and his dead friend who made the remark quoted above. Someone named "Julian Mitchell" narrates the first half of the book in a sensible if chilly account of the interconnections of his life with that of Charles, his moral and artistic conscience, and it must have been truest love. We move from the Midlands to Dorset to late-fifties beat California to London, in the quite acceptable manner of an Isherwoodish or John Wainish not-very-angry young literary man. Charles goes horribly to pot and does himself in; if we can't worry as much as does "Julian" about why, there are good sights along the way to enjoy: house-hunting and the inspection of

> incredibly foetid two-room flats shared by six girls in Earls Court; dripping "garden apartments" in South Kensington which looked into blank walls and dustbins; "penthouses" with clear views of the fourth floors of Marylebone skyscraper office-blocks; Chelsea "maisonettes" of one room.

[1] THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY, by *Julian Mitchell*. Grove. $5.95. IN TRANSIT, by *Brigid Brophy*. G. P. Putnam's. $5.95. WESTWARD TO LAUGHTER, by *Colin MacInnes*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $5.95. TRAVELS WITH MY AUNT, by *Graham Greene*. Viking. $5.95. A FAIRLY HONOURABLE DEFEAT, by *Iris Murdoch*. Viking. $6.95.

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There is also a more bothersome inspection of The Real Mitchell, admiring "Peter Levi the dashing Jesuit" or sitting in "Ron's" (guess who) *Spectator* office talking with David Cairns and Bernard Levin. But after Charles dies all that is left, alas, is Charles's Art: a hundred-or-so page manuscript called *The New Satyricon,* as if the old one weren't enough, with lots of fancy talk about fancy postures and the heavy sense that's it's all a put-up job. Still, the first half of this novel is an intelligently observed and meditated reality.

Which is what human kind can't bear much of, as has been observed, and as is well known by the authoress of *Mozart the Dramatist* and *Fifty Works of English Literature We Could Do Without.* Having provided a way of understanding Mozart without actually listening to the music, and an absolutely super putdown of *Hamlet,* Bunyan, Hopkins and others, Brigid Brophy has now contrived to unburden herself of what Frank Kermode (with due apologies) terms a "phenomenological fantasia." This fantasia takes place, sort of, in an airport, and has sections titled "Linguistic Leprosy" and tempos marked "Allegro non troppo." A "sit-in on the present tense," it features questions like "Are you Jewish, Scottish, Polish?" and answers like "What, me? I'm punish." There is one scene where she-he-it feels up him-her-itself for many pages, the tempo being *andante* for that section: here goes, for example, the jaw:

> I came back, with a greater delicacy of touch, to the exploration of my jaw. Certainly I felt on it some roughness. It was not quite a raspingness. It might be stubble, but minimal recently-shaven stubble. Or it might be the roughness of a female skin that had recently been on holiday.

Or perhaps just a mild spot of leprosy? You see how *problematique* it all is? All right if you like that sort of thing, these "sterne measures" as Kermode (who does like it) calls them. But with lots of Irish added to the mixture and a dedication to "Saint Sexburga" I began uncontrollably to recite the refrain of a recent Geoffrey Grigson poem which celebrates "Brophy la belle going over the Weir." Actually I don't believe, in the words quoted by Anthony Burgess, that "people who read Brigid Brophy / Should contend for the Kraft-Ebbing trophy"; instead, and after staring at her picture, I am convinced that she is really June Allyson, expressing at last her deepest darkest daringest self.

Miss Brophy looks back to Sterne through Joyce; Colin MacInnes models his new book on the 18th century rogue-narrative and gives us the adventures of a young man who unwittingly becomes involved in the slave trade and in a number of horrifying scrapes culminating in his being hanged. As one who admires MacInnes's London novels, particularly *Absolute Beginners,* I finished the adventure story with the hope that he would go back to town. Is it after all such a good thing that, as the recent *Sunday Times* reviewer enthusiastically announced,

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because of imitations like this one the 18th-century English novel is alive and well? It could be argued that one of the best things that happened to 18th-century fiction was that it turned into the 19th-century novel and left behind all that good hoarse sense and masculine life. MacInnes's excellent ear for speech is at work here as usual, particularly in the slaves' talk, but it was easy not to care much about what happened next, and for a short book seemed interminable: "We set course to the north, for Venison said we could find islands there that were not British, but fiefs of the French king . . ." etc. If you can read happily along sentences like that one then *Westward To Laughter* might please.

With what kinds of literary expectations does one pick up the new Graham Greene or the new Iris Murdoch? Perhaps with the sense that, in each case, we've seen about all there is to see. Both writers know exactly what they're doing, both are committed to plots and narrative voices which say exactly what they mean to say in the requisite number of words. No real trouble can develop in these narrative worlds, nobody (except a character, on cue) is going to fall upon the thorns of life and bleed mightily; the resultant entertainments are to be read through with a minimum of troubled pauses and reflections about life outside the book. With Graham Greene there is more than ever the feel of an old master relaxing his powers. Having already gone so far as to allow his voice, though not his face, to be interviewed on the BBC (we looked at the Orient Express instead) he is even more generous in the new novel and lays on strokes broad enough for anyone's taste, even if not primed by the author's earlier books. Suppose, that is, the first paragraph introduced us to the narrator, a retired bank official, adequate pension, unmarried, who apart from his interest in dahlias has no "hobby." If the book were titled *Travels With My Aunt* we would expect much good sport to ensue in the course of which this fellow would learn to flesh himself out a bit. Indeed the book is reminiscent of oldtime campus musicals where the square professor is inveigled into the local snackeria or sweetshop, there to confront some real jive on the jukebox and groovy Betty Co-Ed to instruct him in the mysteries. Henry Pulling, Greene's anemic hero, confronts his magnificent Aunt Augusta in many exotic spots, Brighton being the least of them, and is changed thereby.

The novel has it all ways: whereas in lean Greene days one ran into Coral Musker and attendant sufferers on the Orient Express, today there is only a swell girl named Tooley who smokes pot and says things are *fabulous*. If the narrator is allowed a moment of authentic Greenian cynicism—"her eyes . . . had in them what used to be called by my generation a sexy look, but this might have been caused by short sight or constipation"—by the end of the trip he is admitting that "There was something gentle and sweet about her which reminded me of Miss Keene. It was an absurd comparison to make, of course, and perhaps

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this was what she meant by being turned on." This sort of charm coats the whole book; at its conclusion, when turned-on Henry informs us he is about to marry another sixteen-year-old with whom "often in the warm scented evenings we read Browning together" it's anybody's privilege to do what he wants with the final quoted lines about God being in his heaven. No doubt one last soft wink, but by this time the irony has slipped completely out of service, the parody—if it is that—has nothing serious against which to perform. If you spend your life casting a fictional cold eye on human endeavors, then relax your fiction and warm your eye, the result will be too delightful for belief: would a retired bank clerk, that is, want his aunt to "make jig-jig" with a black named Wordsworth? As always, things are highly accomplished, but Greeneland was more entertaining when chillier.

The Viking dust-jacket man had no sooner finished with *Bruno's Dream* than there was another Iris Murdoch to come to terms with, a new example of her "explorations into the manifold complexities of love" in which "The grotesque and the comic, as always, are used to serious ends and throw light on how we can all be deceived by appearance." I responded eagerly to this hopeful claim since for years I have been combing Iris Murdoch's novels in search of enlightenment on the nature of love, its manifold complexities, and it always seems to boil down to this, that in the words of Rupert Foster, Priory Grove, S.W.10, "Love has its own cunning beyond our conscious wiles." This is the early utterance of a dupe who is later well-deceived by love's cunning. Or is he merely deceived by Julius, resident enchanter of this novel? Not since Mischa Fox ran things in *Flight from the Enchanter* (10 novels ago!) have we had quite so large-mannered and manipulative a "villain" on whose back the sun shines broadly and the book closes peacefully. The question is whether Julius has any more reality than that of a suitably sinister convenience to move around various good-hearted happily-marrieds, solemn fags, and odiously scatterbrained Young People who, as is the convention, find themselves in bed with their sister's husband or steal their son's mother's sister for similar purposes. We hear about exciting events through the voice of a dead-pan omniscient narrator who talks a lot, but really doesn't know much more than that X had felt really affectionate toward Y since Z saw them in a compromising position relative to Q. These sorts of confidences move us, if they move us at all, through 400 odd pages.

The "serious ends" to which this comedy is supposedly used seem to me non-existent; and how good is the comedy anyway when it consists of "big" scenes like Morgan Foster (get it?), ex-lover of Julius, having her clothes cut up by same just when Simon, present lover of Axel but summoned by Julius to the flat, appears on the scene? There are a very few amusing moments, as when Morgan hears people discussing "somebody or something called Dietrich Fisher-Dieskau"; there is one splendid Murdochian panic moment when Morgan tries to rescue a pigeon

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in the Piccadilly tube station and figure out the way to get to Ladbroke Grove: these moments are few and far between. At one point a character significantly asks himself "was Julius wholly serious, half serious, or not serious at all?" and the answer comes back that "It was very hard to say and perhaps Julius himself did not really know." Truer words are never spoken by our narrator. It most surely *is* very hard, nay impossible to say if you adopt as bland and terse a narrative mode as Iris Murdoch now favors (see by contrast the highly flavored voice of *A Severed Head).* Since this mode is inadequate to conceive or enlighten a serious novelistic action we must be content instead with a good read, much watching of people wander from The Boltons to Notting Hill and from one to another. Iris Murdoch has told us how committed she is to the "freedom" of her characters; yet the sense is that of a clockwork plot set in motion behind which the artist has retired to pare her fingernails or perhaps swallow the canary. Could it be that the book of hers where the illusion of freedom was most strong will turn out to be the one most fluidly revealing of an "I" in time and London—*Under the Net?* Compared to *A Fairly Honourable Defeat,* or any of her last half-dozen novels, it lives and breathes with the sense of reality.

On this side of the water novelists presume to do more than entertain and often end up doing less.[2] Some brief notes first: it's hard to say exactly what Kenneth Gangemi presumes (he is probably above that sort of thing) but *Olt* is in the authentic arid Barthelme tradition, all 55 pages of it for just under four dollars. The hero is right before our eyes on every page, or rather "Robert Olt" is the subject of sentences that proceed through verbs like "looked at," "read," "remembered" and culminate in their objects—thirty naked girls, a newspaper, Paris. Really the best part is the jacket information that Kennth Gangemi was born in Scarsdale, took an engineering degree at R.P.I. and is at present working on "a long novel." Longer than *Olt?* We can only wait and pray. Floyd Salas is full of anger and violence, acid and grass, skinny and small-boned hippies, a trip to Mexico with death at the end of it. It's not clear that anybody is sadder or wiser for the experience but the writing bumps you along. So does *Jiveass Nigger,* the lowdown on black cats and white chicks, as if we didn't know already, with a moral at the end. In Swinging Copenhagen too where the sex is livelier but no more meaningful than anything encountered in Iris Murdoch's London. *When the War is Over* reminds us there are still old-fashioned books around, this one a carefully written moral tale about a soldier in the last days of the Civil War. No doubt it is also

[2] OLT, by *Kenneth Gangemi.* Orion. $3.95. WHAT NOW MY LOVE, by *Floyd Salas.* Grove. $4.95. THE LIFE AND LOVES OF MR. JIVEASS NIGGER, by *Cecil Brown.* Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $5.50. WHEN THE WAR IS OVER, by *Stephen Becker.* Random House. $5.95. THE GREAT AMERICAN JACKPOT, by *Herbert Gold.* Random House. $6.95. MAGGOT AND WORM. by M. M. Liberman. The Cummington Press.

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"about" more than that, but I came away with the feel of an infantry platoon or of Cincinnati, 1863, and the sense that a novelist cared about rendering an action. As I did not, emerging from the chaos of Herbert Gold's trivial romp around the Bay Area: "Millie had joined forces with Paul A. (Poopie) Cola. She was making a new life for herself and it improved her complexion . . . under the constant care of Poopie, the hickies went away all by themselves. She was clearing up nicely." To read Herbert Gold's recent excellent "straight" piece on San Francisco is to wonder what price fiction? Why should we take a novel seriously that merely spins us about from pad to bridge to Black Muslims and Poopie Cola too? Definitely not a laff-riot. *Maggott and Worm* is a nasty title for a handsomely printed volume of stories by M. M. Liberman; The Cummington Press (now installed in West Branch, Iowa) did such a beautiful job that they may have fooled me into thinking the stories of sometimes comparable excellence. But here is a sample from one of them called "Letters from the Thirties" in which a buddy writes his buddy about Detroit:

> O, that was some big, filthy, tawdry, ugly, mean trailer-camp of a town. Everything about it was 10-karat bush. I don't know why it took them so long to get a colored outfielder, when you consider how those peckerwoods had the time of their lives sitting there in the freezing winds of opening day, throwing beer cans at Larry Dody because he muffed a fly . . . . [those] cretins at Briggs Stadium, the ones with the funny beer cans, all had funny uncles at home who had never been the same since the summer of 1943.

The stories have stylistic variety and unpleasant bite; I look forward to more of Liberman's work.

It isn't likely that a newly issued selection from Wright Morris' work[3] will have the hoped-for effect of gaining that writer more readers. Aside from the price ($12.50) there is something unsatisfactory about reading scraps from this and that novel, and when we are allowed to settle down to an entire one here it is *The Works of Love,* an episodic leisurely-paced tracing of a lonely Nebraskan's crazy life. For years Morris has been attempting to come to novelistic terms with, or to find those terms *for,* escape; in a selection included from *The Territory Ahead* he insists that "The best American fiction is still *escape* fiction—down the river on a raft, into the hills on a horse, or out of this world on a ship—the territory ahead lies behind us, safe as the gold at Fort Knox." And there are wonderful moments in *The Works of Love* where the most banal things come together for the lonely, recently-married hero in a fiction of silence, safety and escape:

> Over the summer he liked to sleep in the spare room, with the window open, as he could see down the tracks to the semaphore.

[3] WRIGHT MORRIS: A Reader. Harper and Row. $12.50.

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> When the signals changed, this semaphore made a clicking sound. On quiet summer nights he would hear that sound and then roll on his side, rising on his elbow to watch the coaches make a band of light on the plains. The rails would click, and when the train had passed there would be little whirlwinds of dust and leaves, and a stranger might think that a storm was blowing up.

This American dream is the way it is, and how can we bear it? But another kind of escape is at work here too, what William Carlos Williams, fellow American grainer, called "escape—from the herd" in which suddenly it turns out that "the poet, the unsound man, has twisted loose and, by a stroke, brings home the bacon . . .by the gift of words alone." This selection contains *The Field of Vision* in its entirety, but only a chapter from the book in which Morris found those words and came to the fullest terms with "escape"—in both senses. That book is *The Deep Sleep;* my own Wright Morris reader would contain it, as well as the marvelous (and excerptible) college sequence from *The Huge Season.* Still, to be grateful for what we have, there are moments in these selections when one suddenly knows why he reads fiction, and that it is not just to pass the time.

Wright Morris' novels are filled with men old before their time, enchanted by dreams that (in Yeats's phrase) "engross the present and dominate memory." Frederick Buechner's fifth novel[4] is about an authentic octogenarian, so engrossed, named Peter Ringkoping, a dreamy New England book-dealer who gathers his sons and grandson about him and takes off in a battered car on a quest for Porlock. "Porlock . . . is where the poetry and drama are" muses the grandson Tip (with his L. Frank Baum name) and this sort of cleverness, along with the many Wizard of Oz analogues planted throughout the tale, may strike one as strained or arch or both. Which would be a pity, because *The Entrance to Porlock* is a finely-textured piece of writing throughout, fully devoted despite its visionary yearnings to the look and feel of things and the sounds of voices talking, fertile with correspondences among the passionate attempts of each character to remold the world a little nearer to his heart's desire. The dreams of escape are embodied in these aspirations and given poignant absurdity through Buechner's style, one roomy enough to accommodate vision and wisecrack, as when the old man's book about an Eliotic visionary experience is called, by his madcap son, *Vomit Without Tears.* Or when Tip has this vision in the men's room of a gas station momentarily visited:

> The wooden panels of the stall were covered with scribblings, and he sat to read them: names and dates, the names of towns, states, years, a lopsided heart pierced by an arrow with the heart's blood dripping down, swastikas, circles, all scratched into the gray paint. Kilroy had been there and Eddy M. with a red ballpoint, some friend of Dora's who had inscribed her telephone number. . . . Priapus

[4] THE ENTRANCE TO PORLOCK, by *Frederick Buechner.* Atheneum. $5.95.

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> lunged toward the ceiling unsigned, drawn with a knife blade in a single sweep that had stuttered where the curve came round to leave a little spray of stars, Orion's Belt, in the gray firmament. Braggadocio statistics, how long, how often. . . .

I suppose the book's message could be reduced to not much more than the truth of an old Billie Holiday lyric: "You'll find that happiness lies/ right under your eyes/ Back in your own backyard . . ." and as with Billie Holiday it's the delivery that counts. Frederick Buechner's in this novel is often dazzling.

But next to Saul Bellow even Buechner seems mainly interested in a cleverly-turned book, while the earlier mentioned English folk look even more like eccentric and well-rehearsed entertainers. *Mr. Sammler's Planet*[5] will not find ready acceptance in many ears; it is essentially a conservative lament, sung by a hero who has entered the eighth and surely last decade of his life. Relations between Bellow and Sammler are of the most intimate sort; here the great model is Joyce and Bloom, although Sammler's dignified reserve and responsibly philosophic meditations distinguish him, and he is allowed sufficient old-world irony to interrupt and comment on these meditations. Mr. Sammler's planet is indeed the earth, but that is hard to believe when the sidewalks of New York make another point, behave as if it's not his planet at all:

> More possibility, more actors, apes, copycats, more invention, more fiction, illusion, more fantasy, more despair. Life looting Art of its wealth, destroying Art as well by its desire to become the thing itself. Pressing itself into pictures. . . . Just look (Sammler looked) at this imitative anarchy of the streets—these Chinese revolutionary tunics, these babes in unisex toyland, these surrealist warchiefs, Western stagecoach drivers—Ph.D's in philosophy, some of them . . . They sought originality. They were obviously derivative. And of what—of Paiutes, of Fidel Castro? No, of Hollywood extras. Acting mythic. Casting themselves into chaos, hoping to adhere to higher consciousness, to be washed up on the shores of truth.

There are passages of sociological analysis, not all of them assigned to Sammler, on everyman his own artist, on the healing power of being black, on the "boom in faggots" which could have occurred (and did) in the pages of Wyndham Lewis—in *The Art of Being Ruled* or *Paleface* or *Time and Western Man,* forty-year-old prophetic books. Like Lewis, Bellow-Sammler is fascinated, energized, horrified by what he sees; the anarchy of what are now euphemistically termed "lifestyles" calls forth every resource of literary style to summon them up, while the reader watches in painful exhilaration. Mr. Sammler knows his own planet by the possibility that it may be time to leave it for the moon—"To blow this great blue, white, green planet, or to be blown from it"—so moon-meditations are spaced through the book and

[5] MR. SAMMLER'S PLANET, by *Saul Bellow*. Viking. $6.95.

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culminate in a fine moment when Sammler fully articulates why the moon is not "advantageous for us metaphysically." But not *quite* fully: it is the mark of Bellow's comedy, his insistence that things speak back to our formulations and disposals of them, that this big speech is interrupted in mid-sentence and never concluded, as the water pipes burst and a house in Westchester suddenly looks to be deluged, with no ark at hand.

Death is of course the final deluger and interrupter and, as in Bellow's other great fiction *Seize the Day*, the novel moves its hero toward it. Sammler, hurrying to the hospital to see his dying friend and perhaps complete their unfinished sentences, must deal once more with the West Side, the "great, great crowd," the quaking gleaming streets where Tommy Wilhelm lived and suffered. Here it is Broadway at 96th that challenges Sammler:

> . . . its Caribbean fruits, its plucked naked chickens with loose necks and eyelids blue, the wavering fumes of Diesel and hot lard. . . . He was never up to it. And why should there be any contest? But there was, every time. For something was stated here. By a convergence of all minds and all movements the conviction transmitted by this crowd seemed to be that reality was a terrible thing, and that the final truth about mankind was overwhelming and crushing. . . . This poverty of soul, its abstract state, you could see in faces on the street. And he too had a touch of the same disease—the disease of the single self explaining what was what and who was who.

Sammler's hells are not, finally, for other people. The achievement of Bellow's novel is that it can let its hero, standing over the dead body of Elya Gruner, speak the heart-piercing and absolutely inevitable words which end the book. Next to these words even Bellow's brilliant writing about Tommy Wilhelm in the last paragraph of *Seize the Day* is a novelistic contrivance to make up for what the poor hero can't say himself. There is nothing at the end of this one but Sammler's voice, perhaps not even that since the words ring so impersonally, hopelessly, authoritatively true. And no sudden accession to truth, no vanquishing of death à la Ivan Ilyich. Compared to *Herzog* the book feels sparer, more concentrated, all of a piece. *Mr. Sammler's Planet* says the worst that can be said for human conditions, parodies most of its high lamentations with absurd comic analogues of them in unlikely places, refuses to create a villain, even a "confuser of the imagination" (Tamkin in *Seize the Day*), leaves us with nothing more than conscience, the responsibility of being human, what every man knows is expected of him. It also shows us one more strange way in which death is the mother of beauty; and it elevates us thereby. It says no to every brilliant feat of the recent American novel, whether performed by Pynchon or Barth or Nabokov or their imitators; yet it is absolutely contemporary, for an age and I should suspect for all time too.

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ROGER SALE

Thinking About Cities

EIGHT YEARS AGO, having spent my life in small towns in the east, I moved to Seattle. There was nothing extraordinary in that, people do it all the time, but I came here in order to live in a city while most people don't come to Seattle at all but to some place called the Pacific Northwest: mountains, forests, fresh and salt water, great fishing and climbing, etc., anyplace but a city. As a result, when I wandered around trying to find out what kind of city Seattle is, I found few people to talk to. I was given the impression that others thought if I really wanted to live in a city I should have stayed east, or gone to San Francisco. Then I found Jane Jacobs' *Death and Life of Great American Cities.* It was, and is, a rather staggering book, not about urban design or renewal, not swamped in the sentimental notion that all major decisions in cities are made by bureaucrats and insurance companies, really about what one could see if one opened one's eyes. Quite simply, Mrs. Jacobs believes that cities are intelligible, and she shows over and over what makes one city park fail and another succeed, why short blocks and old buildings are important, what happens when you change two-way to one-way streets, how city neighborhoods can gain or lose power. What made it particularly fascinating for me was that in Mrs. Jacobs' terms Seattle wouldn't seem to qualify as a "great American city." It is large enough, perhaps, but it appears to follow suburban rather than urban schemes of living; I live in the central area, on the edge of the ghetto, but as I write I look out onto lawn and a hedge, a holly tree where robins eat berries, and the roof of my neighbor's house. Thus a great deal in *Death and Life of Great American Cities* had to be translated into Seattle terms. But because the book is not only staggering but immensely sensible, the translation could be made, and once made, Seattle became understandable and patterns of living and dying emerged. I spent long hours walking and driving around, flabbergasted and pleased at how much I could learn.

I soon learned also that here and throughout the country Mrs. Jacobs was being reviled. Of course she had her cheerleaders, but they too were thought of as nuts, quaint and nostalgic seekers of some long gone golden age when city life was safe and interesting and pleasant. I remember a review that compared the author and her followers to a scene in a Grace Moore movie where Miss Moore drives down a street, stands up in her car to sing something like "That's Amore," and soon shopkeepers and passersby are coming in on the chorus. The allega-

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tion always seemed to be that Mrs. Jacobs likes the corner candy store and doesn't like supermarkets or housing projects, and obviously anyone who thinks that way is unqualified to comment on twentieth-century disasters like American cities.

Now, eight years later, the pattern seems to be repeating itself, for me, Mrs. Jacobs, and her critics. I am on sabbatical, trying to write a history of Seattle, which to many seems absurd because Seattle is to them not much more than a large huddle of houses barely a century old, and which to me seems simply very hard. As if to show me that and even how it can be done, Mrs. Jacobs writes *The Economy of Cities,* shorter and more analytical than her first book, but if anything better, more challenging and releasing, because if there is anything people are really cynical and unthinking about it is economics.[1] So I have spent the last few months seeing how Seattle's economic history is describable in Mrs. Jacobs' terms, and along the way I note that it looks as though this book too will be misunderstood and shunned. The reviewer in *Commentary* says that though it is closely and densely argued, which it certainly is, it really is a kind of economic pastoral, which it certainly isn't; the man in *The New York Review of Books,* though claiming to approve, can find no better term to describe Mrs. Jacobs than the evasive and misleading "anarchist."

For better or worse, what Mrs. Jacobs is is a vitalist; her key words are "growth" and "stagnation." She is not in any usual sense of the term an optimist—"In human history, most people in most places most of the time have existed miserably in stagnant economies"—but because she is a vitalist her sense of history is not linear and so she believes that processes of growth can begin in all but the most moribund and despairing economies. Seeing possibilities for life, however, is not the same as pretending they exist where they don't, and a good deal of the book is taken up with showing how cities stagnate. For her the great wrecker is coagulation of power and money, usually as the result of some earlier wonderful success, in the hands of those who make even large cities into company towns because they are unware that they are changing the city they bleed from a living body to a turnip to a stone. A city needs constantly to be developing new work from its old work, and if it only goes on making its old work more efficient, it will eventually atrophy when other cities begin to make what it makes or other products and processes render its work obsolete. Like ancient Harappa, which went on turning out, in greater and greater quantities, solid wheels and one-piece weapons and implements while other cities were learning to make spoked wheels and ribbed instruments and thus lighter and stronger vehicles and tools. Like medieval Dinant, which concentrated on making wonderful brass vessels and so declined when London and Paris began making them too. Like nineteenth-century Manchester, which Engels and Disraeli saw as the city of the

[1] THE ECONOMY OF CITIES, by *Jane Jacobs.* Random House. $5.95.

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future, but which stagnated because it tied everything to its textile industry. Like modern Detroit, which is dying from a surfeit of cars. Like Seattle, which triumphed over other cities on Puget Sound and then over Portland because in its early years it was creating all kinds of work that was not simply logging and shipping, and which has "grown" into a company town where everyone's job and psyche is tied up with the fortunes of the Boeing Company. Efficiency not only makes slaves, as we have always known, but is in itself a form of slavery for cities.

The stories Mrs. Jacobs tells about these cities are too long to be quoted in full, but let me paraphrase the one about Detroit. The city began, as all cities do according to Mrs. Jacobs, as an exporter, in this case of flour, and everything else it made—candles, shoes, hats, whiskey, soap—was only for local consumption. Around the flour mills and the docks grew up machine and repair places—Detroit's first instance of making new work from old—then parts manufacturers and shipbuilders. By the 1860's some people who had started out in the mills had broken away and were making marine engines, and Detroit became a major exporter of both engines and ships. In turn these new enterprises began to support new businesses, suppliers of parts, tools, and metal. The biggest of these were refineries of copper alloys made from local copper ore, and soon the exporting of copper and copper products became Detroit's biggest business. Then the copper ore ran out, and had the city's economy been dependent completely on this one industry, it would necessarily have begun to stagnate. Instead Detroit moved into the period of its most explosive growth, and grew from 116,000 to 285,000 people between 1880 and 1900. What is even more remarkable is that Detroit did this without finding one big new industry to take the place of copper refining, so that it looks as though Detroit was growing explosively without having anything to sustain it. But part of the growth was the result of having generated a host of other exports—paints, varnishes, steam generators, pumps, lubricating systems, tools, store fixtures, stoves, medicines, furniture, leather for upholstery, sporting goods; part was the result of making for itself more of what hitherto it had had to import, and "import replacing" is a city's major means of creating great and diversified growth. To replace an import is to create new local work and is also to create the conditions whereby this new work may thrive, as will happen whenever the product or service, once imported and now locally made or done, is developed into a new export.

It was, thus, no accident that the automobile industry was successful in Detroit, because Detroit was already making all that Henry Ford needed:

> He bought from various suppliers in Detroit every single item he needed for his cars—wheels, bodies, cushions, everything. The Dodge Brothers, young mechanics who had been producing transmis-

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> sions for Olds in their machine shop, expanded to make Ford's engines. They were adding work. The first Ford factory was a wooden building in a coal yard, financed by the carpenter who built it. . . . Ford's first significant innovation of any kind—and one of the most important he was ever to make—was to promise customers that they could get a complete stock of repair parts for Ford cars. At first he bought these parts from his subcontractors, the same people who supplied the original components. But then he began making repair parts himself, beginning with those that proved to be most in demand. Thus little by little, he added to his assembly work the manufacturing of part after part. By the time he was ready to put the first Model T into production, late in 1907, he was capable of much of its manufacture.

This sequence of Ford's early activities is the great sign of the vigor and health of Detroit's economy. The point is not that it couldn't have happened elsewhere, but that a relatively small city was sufficiently diverse in its manufacture to supply Ford with all he needed.

But this very success was a danger sign, and one that no one in Detroit read rightly:

> The Chinese ideogram for "crisis" is composed of the symbols for "danger" and "opportunity"; just so, a very successful growth industry poses a crisis for a city. Everything—all other development work, all other processes of city growth, the fertile and creative inefficiency of the growth industry's suppliers, the opportunities of able workers to break away, the inefficient but creative use of capital—can be sacrificed to the exigencies of a growth industry, which thus turns the city into a company town.

And so, as Mrs. Jacobs says in another place while showing what goes wrong when capital is exported instead of being used locally, the story ends:

> Almost no capital is used in Detroit for developing new goods, services, enterprises or industries there, while Detroit exports extraordinary amounts of the capital it generates. Some is exported in the form of the immense philanthropies of the Ford Foundation, dispensed from its headquarters in New York throughout the world. Among other things, the Foundation has financed many studies of the "causes" of poverty, and of what is wrong with the poor in stagnant cities.

Hardly an economic pastoral, and whatever of anarchy there is in the idea of creative inefficiency, there is no anarchy at all in that prose; it is hard to think of so strongly latinate a vocabulary being made so spare and direct.

What is important as an idea is the pattern: a new city exports to

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an older city, then creates supporting goods and services, then experiences explosive growth as it replaces its imports with locally made goods and services and so earns new imports, then creates new exports out of its new local industries. But, though this is central to her book, it is not the idea, really, that makes *The Economy of Cities* so exciting; it is, rather, the immense variety of examples used to buttress the central terms. One can imagine, for instance, someone at the Ford Foundation reading my quotations above and snorting at a phrase like "the inefficient but creative use of capital," because he did not remember or found irrelevant the very creatively used capital in Detroit around the turn of the century that made, among other things, the Ford Foundation possible. Or because he had not read elsewhere in the book about the way bicycle manufacturing in Tokyo, now an international industry, began when lots of bike repair shops in that city began making parts to fix imported bikes; immensely creative, that, but it would have been much more efficient to have Schwinn or Columbia just come in and make their own, and much more regressive too. Or what about the story of Thiokol, the Kansas City firm trying to make anti-freeze, that was driven out of town by Prendergast because the smell tainted the bootleg liquor, and ended up as the first manufacturer of the solid fuels used in space rockets. Reading such stories gets one in the habit of finding them oneself. The other day I heard a friend of mine who works for Caesar Chavez talk about pesticide manufacturing, and it wasn't hard at all to see that the better and safer pesticides needed by the farm workers would not be made by the presently powerful and efficient firms because there is no need for them to do anything differently unless the political heat gets too much. Rather, the pesticides of the future will almost certainly be developed by a new, small outfit. Perhaps its people will come from one of the existing big pesticide firms, perhaps from a company now not interested in pesticides at all but in perfumes or desalinized water. Wherever they come from, however, they will be sorely in need of inefficient but creative capital, inefficient because almost certainly the new pesticide makers will not score on the first or even the fiftieth try—which is why the likes of the Crocker Citizens Bank will go on investing in the likes of Shell Chemical—and creative because Mrs. Jacobs is right: the only way new things happen is by breaking away, starting clumsily, and doing something most people wouldn't do at all.

That there is something mysterious about all this is part of its excitement: "All that Birmingham seems to have had, to begin with, was a good supply of drinking water—no novelty in Renaissance England." But being aware of the mystery not only makes the examples rich, it also allows Mrs. Jacobs to score repeatedly against people who are happiest at the drawing board and most uncomfortable when looking at the real world. In *Death and Life of Great American Cities* the

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enemies, cited so often it really becomes an annoying tic, are the planners and the urban renewal boys. Here they take more varied forms and are shoved out of the way in neat, short bursts. On the location theory of cities:

> The mouth of the Connecticut River, the largest river of New England, is so fine a site for a depot city that had a major city grown there, we may be sure that it would have been accounted for in the geography textbooks by its location at the river mouth. But in reality, this site has brought forth only the little settlements of Lyme and Old Saybrook. . . . Among the best natural harbors in Britain, for example, are those belonging to the settlements of Ipswich, Yarmouth, King's Lynn, Sunderland, South Shields, Lossiemouth, Shoreham, Stornoway, and Greenock. . . . Many cities engaging in enormous trade occupy notably inferior trading sites. Tokyo and Los Angeles are examples.

On the relation of overpopulation, natural resources, and poverty:

> Furthermore, if people cause their own poverty by their own numbers, it follows that if a given population is reasonably scanty to begin with, it will not be poor. Yet countries that have always been thinly populated, and have rich resources besides, are quite as liable to poverty as heavily populated countries. Thinly settled Colombia, has topsoil rich and deep beyond the dreams of Iowa, and high-grade iron ore beyond the dreams of Japan, yet Colombia festers in poverty and economic chaos worse, if anything, than densely populated India.

As I say, all this is very mysterious, in a way that makes you want to look around, to reflect on what you know of elsewhere, to read the yellow pages and the U.S. Census and see it all differently, as if for the first time. You take a sentence out of context and it seems only that someone is riding a hobby horse: "What we abstractly call the dissemination of cultures consists of many exports, some of them amazingly complex, that were first developed within the local economies of cities." But put it back into context:

> The scrolls that went from Athens to the great library of the ancients in Alexandria, the complex work of Roman surveyors and engineers who mapped out aqueducts in the Iberian peninsula and Gaul, the treatises on agriculture and fossils and the musical instruments that went forth from Paris to Thomas Jefferson in Monticello, the periodicals sent from London to Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia, the medical work being done by teams of specialists and sent forth from present-day Peking—these are not what one could call simple exports.

It's like having a whole new world to think about.

In our making and unmaking of cities lies our great difference from

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other animals, the humanness of our hopes and awfulness. Because she is so clear, Mrs. Jacobs is also a very stern judge: most cities stagnate, only a few live to earn over and over the process of renewal. But she can show also that our present wantonness with our environment is not simply a matter of original sin, or the necessary concomitant of a burgeoning technology, and also make it clear that we can renew our air and water and find better means of transporting ourselves simply by using the very means we used to create filth and waste. My city has just put a new airplane on the market, one so huge it seems to darken the sky like an eclipse. It will do in some ways better and more efficiently what airplanes are supposed to do, move people great distances very fast. And after the Boeing 747 comes the SST. These planes will probably complete the job of making Seattle into a company town, and almost certainly they will create air and automobile congestion and noise as yet unexperienced. Yet as Seattle lurches—happily no less—to fulfill the economic destiny of Detroit along the urban patterns of Los Angeles, yet it could be that even here someone—not a division of Boeing, surely, or a governmental advisory board, but someone—is now at work on a machine or material that makes engines less noisy or that moves people along the ground in quantities and at speeds analogous to those of the big planes in the sky. The fact that many people, if asked, would guess that such things will be done by the Japanese or the Germans means they really believe them possible. Mrs. Jacobs quotes Alcaeus on Greek cities in 600 B.C.: "Not houses finely roofed nor the stones of walls well built nor canals nor dockyards make the city, but men able to use their opportunity."

That men have at some times and in some places been able to use their opportunity is not a matter of faith but of history. What is at bottom so invigorating about Jane Jacobs, for all that she stresses the way "most people in most places most of the time have existed miserably in stagnant economies," is her strange and wonderful conviction that men love to work. The joy of working, of course, lies in trying to make new things, whether they be truly new, as with inventions or great works of art, or new adaptations of old solutions for new problems and local conditions, like good urban building, or literary criticism, or *The Economy of Cities,* or Japanese bicycle manufacture. That we build from old work is both a sign of the necessity of cultural continuity and of that economic health which makes the present potentially productive and the future possible. The old, if it is powerless, must stagnate and die, and if it is powerful is apt to be conservative, even destructively reactionary. It is for this reason, one presumes, that so many of the world's newer economies are trying to get along without cities because cities for them mean either the old and dying or the old and reactionary, or both. One knows perfectly well why Castro hated the Havana of Batista and distrusts it still, or why Ho Chi Minh might go to war against the dying and reactionary Saigon. But Mrs. Jacobs is surely right in insisting that human beings develop

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as their cities develop, and that no rural economy can last for long without the renewing power of cities to make new work out of old. Among her bagful of stories are ones about the farcical efforts of the Rockefellers to make a birth control factory in the Indian countryside or the self-defeating aspects of Mao's Great Leap Forward.

There are ways to disagree with Jane Jacobs, but not as many as you might think, because on her own terms she is almost invariably right and the real questions arise when you start to consider what she has left out. For instance, in *Death and Life of Great American Cities* Los Angeles comes in for some pretty solid pasting: the place is unsafe, ugly, and weak in growing those veins and arteries on which the lives of great cities depend. In *The Economy of Cities* Los Angeles must come off much better because it fits all the patterns for explosive city growth that Mrs. Jacobs shows are necessary in the cyclical life of a healthy city economy; indeed, one of her most staggering lists is of all the things Los Angeles started to make in the late 1940's just when its death was predicted because it had lost its wartime airplane industry. There is a discrepancy here that Mrs. Jacobs does not face in either book, which might not be worthy of remark were it not that it leads one to ask if or how the growth of some cities is preferable to that of others even when both are fulfilling Mrs. Jacobs' patterns of continuing renewal, and, conversely, if there aren't some kinds of economic stagnation that are preferable to others. I know that of course Mrs. Jacobs can reply to these questions by assenting to their implied answers and adding that such matters lay outside the scope of her inquiry. But such a reply would be at least a little ingenuous, because Mrs. Jacobs is a vitalist and because she is interested in all forms of life—one of the joys of her book is the way she makes so many things relevant to the economy of cities. I do not think Los Angeles a total disaster because it is so very obviously a triumph, but I also think that what has triumphed there is in many ways frightening.

Let me put it another way. For *The Economy of Cities* Los Angeles and Tokyo are the contemporary heroes because Mrs. Jacobs can show that in both instances a city, without great nearby natural resources, without good harbors, with a severe threat of overpopulation, "just grew" because men have been able to use their opportunity there. We know also that many Europeans, who live in cities we love but which they think are dying, look upon Los Angeles and Tokyo as the great good cities of the future. Let me add that Mrs. Jacobs grew up in Scranton, Pa., a city that never grew beyond its first spurt of explosive activity, and has spent most of her adult life in New York, a great city whose signs of stagnation no one is better at listing than Mrs. Jacobs. It seems to me at least plausible that someone whose life has followed that pattern might be driven to see economic health as absolutely crucial, as it might be for someone who grew up in Manchester or Lyon and moved to London or Paris. In such contexts it is easy to see

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why one might come to idealize Los Angeles or Tokyo. Furthermore, though I know little of either city, I always feel a strong urge to idealize them whenever I hear them denounced by someone who makes it clear that what he really dislikes is either cities or whatever century he is living in.

Still, there is more to the problem than learning the rhythms of history. To be a vitalist is to believe almost absolutely in patterns, and to do that is to choose to overlook the ways history does not just make patterns and the ways one city is not the same as another no matter how similar their patterns of growth and decay. Though Seattle is fulfilling the economic destiny of Detroit along the urban patterns of Los Angeles, it is very much different from either: in its God-given beauties, in its position on the continent, in its historical period of growth, in tangible things that make living here different from living there, or there. The maker of patterns must stress likenesses, there is no other way, and the vitalist must accept life wherever he finds it. But much of the mystery of cities lies in their differentness one from another, and when she overlooks those differences, for whatever good or obvious reasons, Mrs. Jacobs becomes at least partially kin to those people she rightly dislikes most, the planners and governments determined to make similar things into the same things. From the angle of, say, London, Los Angeles and Tokyo become the same place; from the angle of New York, Seattle and Detroit and Atlanta are one. When you see as well as Jane Jacobs does, you can see a lot looking from such vantage points, but you miss a lot too, and it is the special quality of those who see clearly and well (especially when they are attacked for their greatest vitues) that they tend to take what they leave out and pretend it is not there. Men may live miserably, and many surely do so because they live in stagnant cities, but as our greatest vitalist has said, it is the quality of unhappy households to be very much different one from another.

Perhaps all I am suggesting is another reason why it is in the examples and in the lists that *The Economy of Cities* is most wonderful, for it is there that Mrs. Jacobs gives us, with the density of a great nineteenth-century novelist and the clarity of a splendid revisionist historian, the mystery of and reason for the human achievement that is city life. The Japanese bike makers, the Roman engineers, Los Angeles in the 1940's, the Dodge boys, the Parisian books on fossils exported to Virginia—all in a short book one can read in an evening. And I've not said a word about New Obsidian, or the origin of Route 128 around Boston, or the great future for chemical toilet manufacturers, or the lady who made the first brassiere. To call such abundance anarchy or pastoral is to walk down West Eighth Street or Charing Cross Road and to long for Stuyvesant Town or Welwyn Garden City.

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HAYDEN CARRUTH

End of the Sixties

SEVENTY-FOUR. BOOK REVIEWERS SHOULDN'T complain about their lowly exertions, I know, and I'm not complaining; but I do think the number of books I have received this quarter, which happens to be the last quarter of the 1960's, is worth mentioning. Seventy-four.

The strain on one man is obvious, but it would be unimportant if it were not metonymous for a larger strain, and that is what draws my attention now. Since I began, six or seven years ago, to take my turn at these quarterly assignments, the number of books sent to me each time has increased, and the rate of increase has accelerated. Seventy-four is not quite, but nearly, double what I received for my last quarterly survey in 1968. And let me emphasize this: the quality of these seventy-four is high. I don't say any of them will "survive"; one might, or two or three at the outside, but more likely none; yet this seems no longer to be a matter of concern, certainly not among young writers. These seventy-four books had been screened before they reached me, by both direct and indirect means, and what matters is that they virtually all are works of serious, sensitive, humane, intelligent, courageous, and generous endeavor. I ended my reading, with fatigue, yes, one would expect that, but also with a sense of indebtedness to all the poets, a generalized gratitude for these good men and women in the midst of a society so largely devoted to barbarism. Only half-a-dozen of my books seemed too paltry for comment, which leaves sixty-odd for this review—an impossible number. And what this tells me is only what I've been told recently in many other ways. For instance I estimate my mail, taken altogether, now brings me new books and magazines of poetry at the rate of seven or eight hundred a year. What can I do with this mass? I can't read it, I long ago gave up trying. I distribute it where I think it will do the most good; but I have the impression this is a failing effort, I have the impression our whole mechanism for distributing poetry, which was a poor mechanism at best, is now collapsing. As the rate of production and distribution goes up, the rate of true absorption goes down.

A young friend of mine, Geof Hewitt, has recently edited an anthology called *Quickly Aging Here: Some Poets of the 1970's,* which will be published too late for inclusion among my seventy-four.[1] It contains work by thirty-five young poets, of whom twenty-nine are totally unknown to me. Yet I do my best to keep up with the little magazines. In his introduction Hewitt says he hopes his book "will demonstrate that poetry of merit is being written faster than we can

[1] Doubleday. $1.95.

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ever read it." To my mind the point is incontestable, though I'm not sure I welcome it with Hewitt's enthusiasm.

But I don't repulse it either. I am simply confused. Only one thing seems clear to me: after a decade of extraordinary change we are probably in for another decade of change no less extraordinary. But whereas the changes in our poetry during the 1960's were chiefly brought about by our poetic leaders or by social pressures and were concerned with the theory, technique, and substance of poetry, I suspect the changes of the 1970's will come, so to speak, from below, from readers who are massively bombarded by new "poetry of merit," and they will concern not poetry itself but our attitude toward it, our conception of its role in cultural life and of our own function in reading it. Consumer's poetry, journalistic poetry, poetry of the moment, raw poetry—I don't know what we'll call it, but something along these lines. And as one who was brought up to believe that the best way to use a poem is to live with it, I confess I face these changes with unease, because I know that in this one respect my upbringing was right. Thirty years' experience cannot be denied. I have derived more benefit, of both knowledge and enriched feeling, from my protracted, intensive reading of a few poems than I have from the steady inundation of new books that has come to me in my capacity as a reviewer, even though I have often been moved to great (sometimes mistaken) enthusiasm by new poems that have come into my hands.

Such speculation could go on and on. I hope it will, I hope many people will begin to think about these problems, so evidently exceeding the perplexities of book reviewers. But believe me, the perplexities are bad enough. I have reduced my sixty-odd books to forty-three, not because these are the ones I personally recommend, but because in this quarter's output they are the least number about which readers of this magazine should be informed; yet even forty-three are too many to discuss in a conventional quarterly survey. Hence I propose to treat them in very brief, separate paragraphs. I jettison all my lovely thematic fancies of the past three months. This is a compromise, an unsatisfactory compromise, unfair to the readers, the poets, and me. But try as I may I can think of no other that would be, in these circumstances, less unsatisfactory, and I justify it on the ground that book reviewing at best—and I mean honest book reviewing—is still journalism, a matter of expediency. I have divided the forty-three books into several categories, beginning with those to which I usually try to give the most generous attention:

FIRST BOOKS

A Probable Volume of Dreams, by Marvin Bell (Atheneum, $3.95).

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Winner of the 1969 Lamont prize for first books. Though I served on the jury I did not vote for Bell's poems, and I trust no one's confidence will be shaken by the disclosure that these matters are seldom settled with the unanimity implied in the press announcements. The poems seem *too* accomplished: striking and elegant, sardonic, full of ingenious word-play and rhythm-play, but lacking inner urgency. They are highly formed, but ultimately unorganized. No one can fault the writing, however, and since Bell has held off on his first book longer than most young poets nowadays, his characteristic style is already well-known to many readers, and I think well-liked.

Good Times, by Lucille Clifton (Random House, $4.00). A small book of small poems about life in the inner city, by a black poet who, when it comes to the exactly right use of urban dialect, can write rings around her more vociferous colleagues. Her bitterness is not propaganda but poetry; hence we are genuinely moved. I hope before long to see much more of her work.

Dreaming of Floods, by Stuart Friebert (Vanderbilt University Press, $5.00). Remarkable and strange. Friebert gives us a hard, intent, aggressive surrealism, bursting with expressive spontaneity, very acutely toned; but done almost entirely with figures. No music, no verbal felicity. The risk of absurdity is diminished, though not eliminated, by his force and abundance of invention.

Bearings, by Jack Marshall (Harper & Row, $4.95). Wordy, often too abstract, seeming never to pin anything down; yet Marshall's best poems return to the reader in a kind of after-eloquence and sensuousness that convey impressions in spite of themselves—scenes, sensations, weathers—often beautifully.

Anonymous Sins and Other Poems, by Joyce Carol Oates (Louisiana State University Press, $4.50). I am much taken by this book. We'd expect these to be a prose-writer's poems, and in a way they are, seeming, next to the work of other young poets, artless and rough, with too many adjectives and a rudimentary meter. But they acknowledge, without apology, their limitations, and then go after their own utter originality and hardfelt truth with such intelligence, honesty, and sorrowful force that I am won over. No poetic caginess, no pregnant silences; Miss Oates says it all—an unstylish and admirable virtue. Such poems as "Marriage," "Sleepwalking," "Vanity," and a dozen others, though written some years ago and far from our current preoccupations, give me an all-around enjoyment, enlightenment, satisfaction, an unartificial sense of real writing, that I get from few of the capital-letter Poets.

Expressways, by J. D. Reed (Simon and Schuster, $4.95). American expressionism, poems of machine civilization, cars, highways, drive-ins, drag-strips, etc., relentlessly bitter and sarcastic. The tone palls somewhat, and the technique moves toward disintegration—the line-endings simply do not function in any reading method known to me.

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But Reed's vision is clear, candid, and controlled, and his poems produce a black-and-white documentary effect that is immediate and often telling in spite of the shallow language.

We Weep for Our Strangeness, by Dennis Schmitz (Big Table Publishing Company, $3.95). This is the book to which I have returned again and again while reading the others, and I can think of no higher recommendation; a slim book, not many poems, but perfections of their own intent. This is not because Schmitz is a superbly sensitive technician—though he is, and I defy anyone to find a line that should break differently or a motion of syntax that should fall another way against the measure—but because he is heart and soul in the service of his theme: love of the land, particularly of the midwestern farms and riversides, and of the people there. We are reminded of Virgil because Schmitz has translated a couple of passages from the *Eclogues,* but the reminder is misleading. Virgil wrote to formulae and his knowledge was second-hand, and in both respects Schmitz is the opposite. Yet he does have a kind of classical or preclassical, pastoral sensibility. His poems are quiet, simple, almost monosyllabic, unfigured, yet full of color and sound, eloquence and sudden awareness; and if they mean what I think, we have much to expect from Schmitz in the future.

Journal of Return, by Richard Shelton (Kayak Books, $1.50). I don't know if this is Shelton's first book, but it is the first of his I have seen. His mode is what we have come to recognize easily in the past couple of years, an American surrealism characterized by far-out metaphorical facility that often leaves the poem quaint-sounding before it has cooled on the page; a style of "dated contemporary." But one sequence, called "Sonora," is better than the rest, perhaps because that great desert can tolerate no less than the fidelity of poetic wonder, and for this Shelton's book is well worth having.

Lies, by C. K. Williams (Houghton Mifflin, $4.00). Facile, talky poems with a cheerful rhythm and bright metaphorical aptness; a style not attractive to me. But in a few poems, especially a sequence for Anne Frank, it intensifies, becomes barer and draws in against its own feeling, and then it is effective.

IN MID-CAREER

An American Romance, by Carol Bergé (Black Sparrow Press, $4.00). A journal of poems, recording the onset and decline of a love relationship, about two years in duration. Taken poem by poem the work is mostly not memorable; nor intended to be. *En bloc,* however, it gives us an accumulating sensibility, acute, intelligent, alive, courageous, making the trivia of human fortuity into the substance for repeated validations of human integrity. In short, the eternal poet

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getting in the last word. We come to see that the poetic means are mature and responsible, more than equal to the poetic ends, and that the whole work is highly satisfactory.

False Gods, Real Men, by Daniel Berrigan (Macmillan, $4.95). To my mind Father Berrigan's poems are too flaccid, they need editorial tightening up. They read like first drafts, not finished poems; and though many people find his work fresh and spontaneous, the effect seems contrary to me: a somewhat stale imagination. Yet the motive is so evident, and so evidently pure and fierce, and the poet's commitment to humane values is so strong, that one hesitates to complain. Certainly the poems have testimonial importance, not just as documentary, but as evidence of the kind of poetry our social plight demands. Included is a section of verses written during the poet's trip to Hanoi in 1968.

Indiana, by Clayton Eshleman (Black Sparrow Press, $4.50). Eshleman has published a number of books in the past few years, including his widely admired translations of Neruda and Vallejo, but this is his first sizable collection of his own work. His language has evolved from standard Black Mountainese toward a more personal, driven style, rhythmically intricate, twisted, sometimes obscure and elliptical, experimental, lit by flashes of verbal brilliance; it is always interesting and often moving. Thematically, however, his poetry seems less compelling, since much of it centers on raw neurotic obsessions and Reichian interpretations that give the effect, not of depth, but of shallowness, petulance, and failing concern. One hopes for, and expects, a broadening of insight as this obviously developing poetry matures.

Black Pow-wow, by Ted Joans (Hill & Wang, $1.95). Joans, who calls his work "jazz poetry," has some mannerisms I don't care for, such as blaring repetitions in CAPITALS that sound more like Maynard Fergusson than the real thing, or clickety rhymes that sound more like the zoot-argot surrounding jazz than jazz itself. The reticence of the masters, Joe Thomas, Miles Davis, Benny Carter, Lester Young, or even Ornette Coleman—since reticence means not quietness but right relations—seems absent. But at his best Joans avoids these problems. Poems like "O Great Black Masque," "The Over Loaded Horse," "Gri-Gris," and others bring his passionate anger, sexuality, and humor into genuine focus. Then his poetry serves like the bell of a horn, giving his words just the amplification they need—consistent, intelligible, palpable.

The Common Shore, by Robert Kelly (Black Sparrow Press, $4.50). The first five books of "a long poem about America in time." One is tempted to say about Kelly what one has no right to say about any poet: that he writes too much. Nobody can really tell what another person's best writing methods may be. But we have his tally, twenty-two books by a poet born in 1935, and we have his new poem, an

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extremely ambitious work, incorporating cultural materials from our entire heritage, Sumer to the Beatles, and also incorporating, unfortunately, a good many ill-written, vapid, or superfluous lines and passages. The inference is inescapable. Moreover, *The Common Shore* contains many cultural references so private or historically so abstruse that I cannot grasp them. The poem needs notes, and I see no reason why the poet shouldn't supply them. (Because Pound didn't, his hundreds of followers think they need not either, but is that reasonable? Who has time for so much research?) Still the poem holds many beautiful parts, sights and sounds, memories, snatches of music, dance, thoughts found in things, all of which might be the measure of a man and a people. Kelly's aim is no less; and both his capacity and his effort deserve attention.

Wondering Where You Are, by Robert Peterson (Kayak, $1.50). Terribly pessimistic poems, many in the form of unrhymed, loosely metered sonnets; lethargy in words, day to day grind of alcoholism, divorce, loneliness. It is impossible to keep such "flights" of spiritlessness from slipping occasionally below the range of poetry; but at his best, in the manner of Li Po, Peterson is classically corrupt and lucid, yet poetically in control.

Adam's Dream, by Julia Randall (Knopf, $4.50). Miss Randall's poems are in a fashion two decades outworn and essentially southern, with the rhyme and rhetoric to show it; but a few, e.g. "Legend," "Loving 2," "On Hearing of the Death of Paul Tillich," and three or four others, break into the stereotyped verbalisms with a force of direct feeling and religious simplicity that brings them back to originality. These are real poems.

Scattered Returns, by L. E. Sissman (Atlantic-Little, Brown, $4.75). Ironic, allusive, occasional, punning, bouncily mock-formal, hyperbolic. Sissman's poems are not clever enough to be light verse, and are too insincere to be anything else; but they are the single remnant among this quarter's books of a once dominant poetic manner, and are mentioned on that account. Readers in search of the real thing should go back to Auden, to Karl Shapiro's first book, to the best of Elizabeth Bishop or Richard Wilbur or Philip Larkin or . . . well, supply your own favorite.

Pilgrims, by Jean Valentine (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $4.50). I want to be very careful of what I say here because I know my failing as a reader of difficult poems; I have made miserable errors. Miss Valentine's poems strike me as the most accomplished—in the best sense, without slickness but fully realized and valid—that I have read in a long time, yet I cannot penetrate some of them. There is no question of her conscious poetic strategy, since she is obviously in control of her work, but I do wonder if at some other level there may not be a defect of trust; in the poem, the reader, herself, her topic, or the poetic function in general, I cannot tell. It seems as if the

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slightest forthrightness, perhaps only in externals, notes, titles, epigraphs, etc., would make us better partners in these difficult, intense experiences. Her poems are both deeply religious and deeply personal, full of peculiar hard wildness and anxiety, utterly contemporary, unlike anything I have read before; poems of the city and its terrors, and of the strange privacy of city-dwellers; written in language that is tough but never bristly, extremely condensed, yet with syntax and rhetoric perfectly natural, organized by restrained rhythms and inner rhymes; poems marvelously sayable, such as one begins reading aloud without knowing it; but they need many readings—and many readers. I hope they get them.

Graves Registry, by Keith Wilson (Grove Press, $3.95). I don't understand Wilson's capricious line-endings—the peril of contemporary prosody—but otherwise his writing is pointed and reasonable and modestly colorful. Poems of the sea and the desert, life on a ranch, childhood, and then a long sequence on the Korean War that I think is the best I have read about that particular aspect of our folly.

OLDER OR ESTABLISHED

Fragment, by John Ashbery (Black Sparrow Press, $3.00). A long poem in ten-line stanzas of loose pentameter, essentially in the rhythm and syntax of prose. Very abstruse, meditative, and the movement of the verse doesn't help one to pay attention. A type, I'd say, of deeply inquiring poem that mature poets at one time or another are impelled to write, but that their admirers commonly shy from.

Pieces, by Robert Creeley (Scribner's, $4.50). The wit, brevity, technical virtuosity, and almost courtly manner of Creeley's earlier poems are in his new ones too, but overlaid with a more rigorous philosophical intent: questions of being and knowing, seeing and conceiving. Epigrams, prose jottings, quotations (including a piece from some handbook of Tarot), snatches of conversation with friends, letters, formal lyrics, number games, abracadabra, bits of observation: the whole makes an intensely personal collection. Doubtless many readers will regret the tough, elliptical, ungracious, almost anti-poetic tone of much of it; Creeley, I think, would say his aim is not poems in the former sense but the realization or recovery of his whole being in a single uninterrupted poetic campaign. At any rate *Pieces* comes naturally after what he has published already, and leaves the way open for what will come naturally after it. This is poetry in the root-sense: making anew.

Poems, 1965-1968, by Robert Graves (Doubleday, $4.95). Addenda to Graves' *Collected Poems* (1965). Love poems, mostly very brief, meditating themes of time, age, spiritual or mythological identity, and

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sexual knowledge, composed in the Georgian afterglow that Graves has prolonged, sometimes wisely and charmingly, sometimes not, for fifty years.

The Alligator Bride: Poems New and Selected, by Donald Hall (Harper & Row, $4.95). Hall's best poems, some considerably revised, from three earlier books, plus twenty-five new ones. One of their modes, the portentous-descriptive, annoys me considerably; but when Hall writes with knowledge and affection of New Hampshire, past in childhood or present in clamorous decay, he adds something genuine, though small, to the long New England tradition that is not quite as badly frosted as its western detractors imagine.

The Geography of Lograire, by Thomas Merton (New Directions, $4.95). A book-length poem in four books, part of a longer work "in progress," left by Merton at his death. However, what we have here is complete in itself. The most curious part is a section of twenty pages called "Queens Tunnel," autobiographical, confessional, cryptic. Much play on the word *aquilon* with its associations, north wind, noses, eagles, Roman (and U. S.) imperialism, Eliot. "Famous John is inventing you a trap with his agents. Old effigy with Anglican sabres. That turning stair goes up to a stone tiger. Tiger burns with his own secret fright. Sinners are betting on a walking kettle of eyes. Tiger tiger burning in the bay escapes double vision. Lettertrap for old Posthumus." The reference to Eliot (Posthumus [*sic*] = Possum) is obvious; the contrast, not flattering, between *Ash Wednesday* and Blake's Tyger also. I suspect that "Famous John" is John the Evangelist, and that "Queens Tunnel" is a new Revelations, and that *Lograire* itself, which Merton told a friend was taken from Francois Villon, is actually an anagram for something I have not discovered yet (probably in Latin?), and that much of the material in this section of the poem is, if not heretical (which would be unlikely), at least undoctrinal. (I have searched all Villon's work and what is known of his life without finding any *sufficient* justification for ascribing "Lograire" to this source, though it is true that according to the less probable of two stories Villon was born at a place of that name.) Other parts of Merton's poem deal with 17th-century English radicalism, the Amerindian and Melanesian revolutionary religious cults, airplane trips, criticism of Malinowsky—plenty of fascinating material. The writing is gutty, artistically forthright (no compromise with poetic expediency), and shows Merton at a pitch of invention. It falls among his best works, I think, as good a conclusion to his poetic life as anyone could hope for. (Though I'm told there are masses of his writing still stored away.) It will keep the exegetes busy for years at any rate, which ought to please them, though some, the churchly orthodox, will probably be chagrined by what they find. (Yet not all the bandwagon softheads will be comforted either by Tom Merton's fortitude.)

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T&G, The Collected Poems (1936-1966), by Lorine Niedecker (Jargon Society, $4.95). A beautiful book, "illustrated" by A. Doyle Moore with designs of leaves and grass, printed from the plants themselves by a process I don't know; they are exquisite, and a fit accompaniment to Miss Niedecker's shrewd, precise poems of life during the Depression in Wisconsin's carp-fishing country, and other such wistful or humorous adversities. Miss Niedecker, I gather, has not had much encouragement in her writing, until recently and except for the friendship and influence of Louis Zukofsky, and has worked mostly in isolation and neglect; but this little book of thirty years' poems, which needs no commentary, no explanation, but only reading and savoring, will win her new friendly readers—many, I hope.

"A" 13-21, by Louis Zukofsky (Doubleday, $5.95). This, with his *Catullus* published earlier last year (Grossman, $9.50), brings into print virtually all Zukofsky's work to date; which seems not only a blessing but almost a miracle after the long years of scrounging for his out-of-print books. The new volume, carrying his major poem through its 21st movement, bears on its jacket, though not on the title page, a new subtitle, "A Poem of a Life." Nothing is said about his earlier announced intention to complete the poem in 24 movements. What this may mean I haven't heard; but it would seem strange to publish the poem through 21 movements in two volumes if an end were contemplated only three movements further on. And what ending can this "poem of a life" ever have, except a fortuitous cutting-off? An extraordinary work it is, like all his works, which are so firmly one work. All I can really say about it in brief, or perhaps at length, is that from its diversity, its attractions and repulsions, its clarities and obscurities, arises a pure sense of the "quiet once taught to speak," the "mind's peace," human love. It is, without any of the negative meanings, the *sweetest* poem of its kind in modern literature, as far as I know; the best-disposed, the bravest and steadiest. In many ways Zukofsky's *"A"* began thirty years ago a project that other poets have only recently recognized as possible: the creation of existential value, life value, in ordered poetic experience.

FROM ABROAD

Fever and Other New Poems, by Bella Akhmadulina, trans. by Geoffrey Dutton and Igor Mezhakoff-Koriakin (Morrow, $5.50). We see at once why Bella Akhmadulina is the star of Russian poetry today. Her photo shows us a beauty; the biographical notes inform us that she has been twice married unsuccessfully, has been the object of "scandalous" love poems by another famous poet, and has acted in films; her poems tell us that she is tough, intelligent, unlucky, full of romantic pessimism. What could be better? The mythological image

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of all women's hopes and all men's desires. Is she a good poet? I don't know. From my own knowledge I cannot affirm that there has ever been such a thing as a good Russian poet. All the translations, of even those who are said to be the greatest, seem to me awkward and opaque, or simply atrocious; and in the few cases where this isn't true, as in Ted Weiss's versions from Pasternak, I find the translations so close in essence to the translator's original English poems that I conclude I am really getting the translator, not the Russian poet. The translations of these poems by Akhmadulina are about average, i.e. dismal.

Selected Poems, by Anna Akhmatova, trans. by Richard McKane (Oxford University, $3.75). Somewhat better translations. Still it's hard to see how Akhmatova became so popular among her fellow poets on the basis of the slimpsy post-romantic verses, as translated here, that made up her output of the first twenty years (1910-1930). Her later work, so desperately tragic, comes through the translations with a certain power, though I'm not convinced it isn't the power of history rather than the power of poetry. Her longest, most famous poem, "Poem Without a Hero," is not included in this selection, but "Requiem," a sequence from the terrible years of the purges, is; and it will be the most interesting piece in the book for American readers. There is also an introductory essay, tame enough in itself but daring when you consider the circumstances, written by Andrei Sinyavsky before his voice was choked off.

Selected Poems, by Yves Bonnefoy, trans. by Anthony Rudolf (Grossman, $4.00). From England. The selection is from all Bonnefoy's output, hence not a duplicate of Galway Kinnell's translation of the single book, *Du Mouvement et de l'Immobilité de Douve.* But it's interesting to compare Kinnell and Rudolf in the parts they have both done. Kinnell is indisputably the better poet, it shows up time and again in rhythm and word-choice, but both translators can make mistakes. Sometimes only by reading them against each other can one work back to the original. A good case, which I haven't room to quote, is in No. II of the section "Douve Parle" from the aforementioned book.

Selected Poems, by [Eugène] Guillevic, trans. by Denise Levertov (New Directions, $5.95). A splendid example of why translations from western European languages are so much better than those from Russian. The great muffling barrier is gone. Here are two poets, one French and one Anglo-American, yet so close in spirit, even verbal spirit, that translation becomes almost—though I'm sure Miss Levertov wouldn't say this—automatic. Yet isn't there a sense in which the language of the west is universal? Don't all of us, even the linguistically untalented, do some of our thinking in French and German? This is an extreme example. Guillevic will not please everyone. Frankly he seems to me a poet of less intrinsic interest and

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depth than Miss Levertov herself. But the translations are mostly superb, the poems are full of brilliant moments, and the book is highly recommended.

Coming Out Fighting, by Philip Hobsbaum (Dufour, $4.75). Among a dozen books of new poetry from Great Britain, this seems by far the best, though still lacking something—a quality of poetic ambition?—we have come to expect from American poetry. The poems are not strictly a sequence, but separate and individual, yet all deal with the connected, dismal progress of a boozy love affair. Colloquial, sardonic, fluently rhymed and metered in the Anacreontic mode of the British 1950's.

Foreign Bodies, by Karl Krolow, trans. by Michael Bullock (Ohio University Press, $5.50). Together with Bullock's translation of *Invisible Hands,* published a few months earlier (Grossman, no price listed), this gives us a fair representation of Krolow's work. Surrealism from a country with an expressionist tradition, i.e. applied to to the external world, nature and society; but it seems forced and pert. Americans will wonder why Krolow is so well-known and well-liked in Germany; a number of our poets, especially W. S. Merwin, are doing the same thing a hundred times better.

A New Decade, Poems 1958-1967, by Pablo Neruda, trans. by Ben Belitt and Alastair Reid (Grove, $8.50). Selections from the six books Neruda published between *Estravagario* (1958) and *La Barcarola* (1967). Doubtless these translations will renew the controversies that have flourished among Neruda's translators for some years. I myself dislike the way Belitt pads Neruda's lines and changes the punctuation, and though I have never studied Spanish, the language is often simple enough to let me spot mistranslations—a good number of them. Moreover I strenuously disagree with Belitt's method of selection; he gives the short poems intact, but only excerpts from the longer ones; which virtually destroys some of them. Fewer but whole poems, I say. Still the Spanish texts are here, the selection is reasonably generous, and those who wish to learn what Neruda has done in the period following his best-known work will find the book helpful.

Notes to the Hurrying Man, by Brian Patten (Hill & Wang, $3.95). Pop poetry, the eternally adolescent, fake hip—whatever you call it, it is with us; and much of it extremely popular. In Britain the darling of the moment is Patten apparently; but his work, though recommended on the jacket by both Allen Ginsberg and Babette Deutsch—somebody *must* be kidding—seems considerably tamer and more wan than the American version. Mentioned here for the sake of those who like to keep up with such matters.

Collected Poems, by Ruth Pitter (Macmillan, $6.95). All her life Miss Pitter has written as if the last English poet before her were Frederick William Faber or John Francis O'Donnell. Not that she is

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anti-modern; in her yearning to touch the transcendental she is simply oblivious, and takes the homeliest, likeliest way to achieve her end. So it appears, at any rate, though her religious ardor is matched by good humor and an affectionate closeness to nature. At her worst she is thumpingly, methodistically sanctimonious; at her best—and the distance between is immense—she has a mystical lucidity that is almost Blakean. Her collected edition is too big in one way, because it contains a good deal of her worst, especially 100 pages of light verse at the end which even by the standards of the British Sunday press seems pretty detestable. But in such a book one had better err by inclusion than by exclusion. Her best poems are here; read them and overlook the others. And then, somebody, please tell me if I am out of my mind to hear in some of her poems a suggestion of Theodore Roethke? See particularly "The Stolen Babe" (p. 126).

Voices, by Antonio Porchia, trans. by W. S. Merwin (Big Table, $3.95). Porchia, an Italian artisan—though whether a carpenter or a potter seems to be uncertain—was born in 1886, emigrated to Argentina in 1911, and died in 1968. At some point, working apparently from no external literary sources, he began to write aphorisms, very short sentences of great psychological and philosophical depth, which he published at his own expense. Gradually they became known, and won considerable popularity in Latin America and Europe, but this is their first appearance in English, as far as I know. By the end of his life Porchia had revised and cut his work to make a collection of 600 aphorisms, from which Merwin has selected 242 for his excellent translation, and readers of this book will doubtless make a further personal selection; such is the fate of the aphorist. In their trenchant humaneness and pessimism, the aphorisms are close to Kafka, Borchert, Malraux, and many others; and they are one more evidence, if any were needed, that the great shift of sensibility during the past century, which some intellectuals have arrogated to the name of Existentialism, is far more than a fashion of thought; it is deep in the hearts of mankind.

Idanre and Other Poems, by Wole Soyinka (Hill & Wang, $1.75). The Nigerian writer Soyinka, who the last I heard was still in jail for his Biafran sympathies, is already known here; two of his plays have been produced in New York, and other works have appeared in magazines. But his poetry is the heart of his achievement. Like other Nigerian poets, Okigbo especially, Soyinka was trained in England and is obviously indebted to the apocalyptic movement of the 1940's, Thomas, Watkins, Barker, and the rest. But he has made a genuine effort to amalgamate his self-conscious modern technique with native African materials, and if the seam still shows a little, if the diction is sometimes too mannered, nevertheless he has succeeded remarkably well. The major poem in this collection, *Idanre,* is a long visionary work based on Yoruba creation mythology; I wish it were

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more fully annotated. But even in spite of the parts we cannot understand, it remains a powerfully conceived and beautifully written poem, and many of the shorter ones are no less valuable.

SPECIALS

Selected Verse, by Georges Zuk, trans. by Robin Skelton (Kayak, $1.50). A hoax. I'm 95% certain, though at present without access to the kind of library I'd need to check it out, that these "translations" were manufactured by the yard, by Skelton, George Hitchcock, and their friends. A spirited and not altogether unserious enterprise, and it will be interesting to see who is taken in.

Animae, by W. S. Merwin (Kayak, $1.50). Twelve poems about animals—and "about" so much more—with drawings by Lynn Schroeder. To my mind these are perfect specimens of their kind. Some go back to Merwin's previously published books, some are new, including three remarkable poems: "Words from a Totem Animal," "Fly," and "For a Coming Extinction." The whole makes an extremely attractive presentation pamphlet.

Rivers of the Pacific Northwest, by William Dickey (Two Windows Press, San Francisco, price not given). A quiet, intensely personal and affectionate tribute to the lands and waters of Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia; honest and good work, imbued with the further spirit of honesty and goodness. Another splendid pamphlet.

Technicians of the Sacred, ed. by Jerome Rothenberg (Doubleday, $3.95). Not new; but this big anthology of materials from sources deep in mankind's spiritual and poetic origins seems to me so important that I take this opportunity to note its appearance in a paperbound edition at a very reasonable price.

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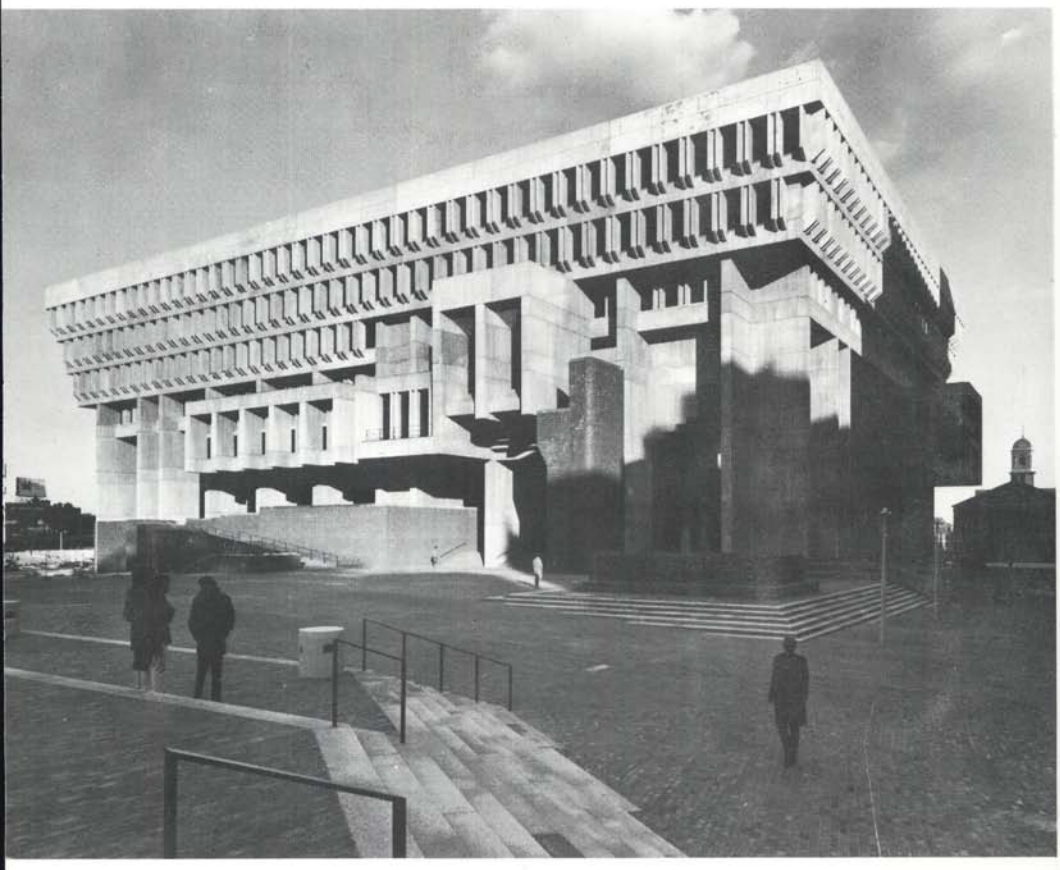

Pictures in order of appearance:

West (principal) façade (Faneuil Hall in right distance)
South lobby skylight
Public Spaces
Looking up from entrance to north lobby
East side looking toward northeast corner
South Mayor's office

(Photo credit: Randolph Langenbach)

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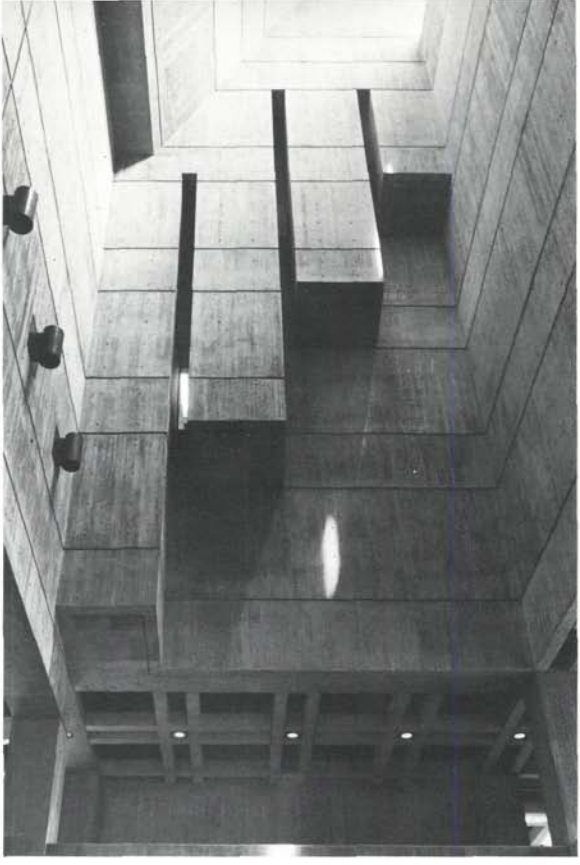

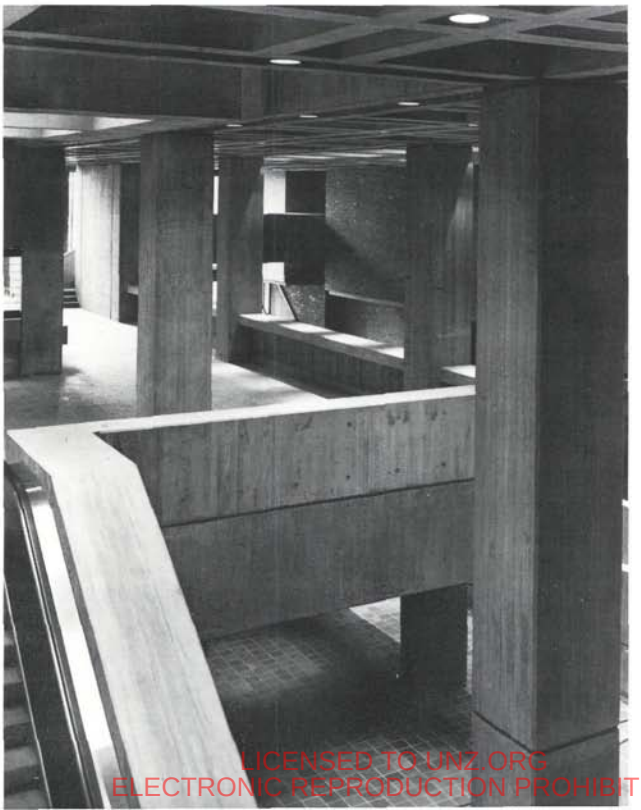

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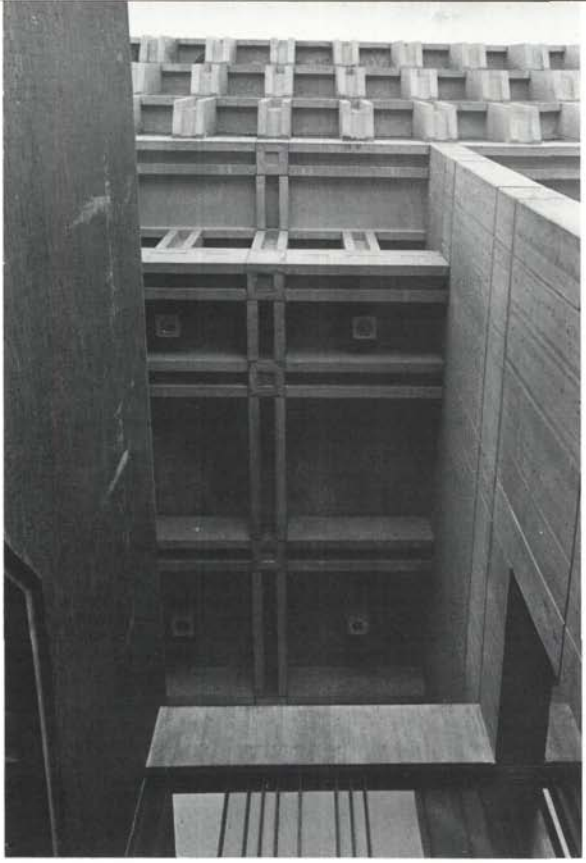

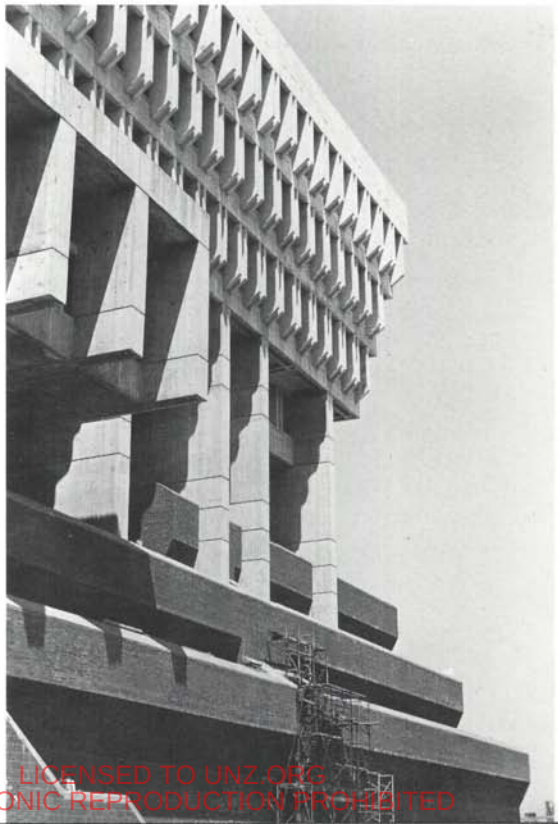

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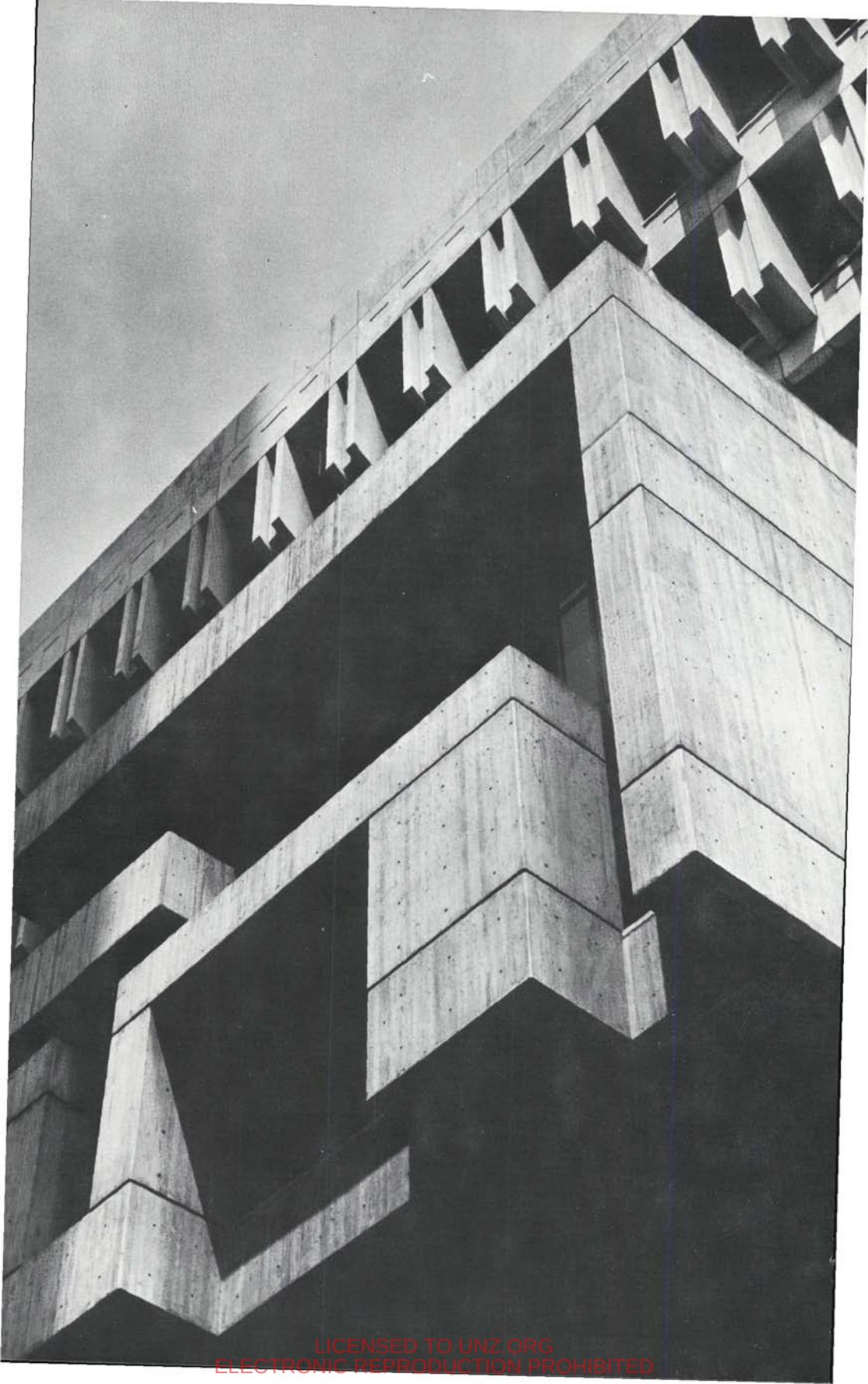

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